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1996 Year of the Videogame

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Sega's Boss Talks Back

Tom Kalinske declares war on Sony's PlayStation

M2

3DO's super-console readies for US launch

volume two

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And you thought 1995 was cool.

The 64-bit videogames of 1996 are almost here. **Are you ready?**

Namco's *Ridge Racer Revolution* is PlayStation's chance to strike back at Sega's awesome *Sega Rally*. More of the same will not be enough, as the battle between Sega and Sony continues apace. Page 98

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HOLLYWOOD: Why the movie moguls just *don't get* interactive entertainment


1996

1996: Year of the Videogame

You think the battle between **Saturn** and **PlayStation** is tough? You ain't seen **nothing** yet. The year 1996 will see the launch of Nintendo's **Ultra 64**, the most anticipated piece of gaming hardware since the Super NES. And **Matsushita's** acquisition of 3DO's **M2** technology will prompt the arrival to the war of the world's biggest consumer electronics company (yes, it's **bigger** than Sony). Starting on page 64 **NEXT Generation** outlines the challenges facing each of the major game companies seeking to dominate the 1996 game industry.

But as we move **forward** into 1996, a look **back** is **vital** if no other reason than to see just how far we've come. Less than 12 months ago 3DO, Jaguar, and the PC were gamers' only options for high-end gaming, while 16-bit still ruled the videogaming roost. It was obvious everything was going to **change**, but no one knew how. And as 1995 unfolded — from **Saturn's sneak attack launch** to the **Sony's surprising success** in a "business they know nothing about" — it was clear that videogaming would never be the same again. A look back on the year that built the foundations for 32-bit and 64-bit gaming starts on page 36.

Video and computer gaming has never been so exciting. Let's hope it stays that way.

NEXT GENERATION

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January 1996

a film by
NEXT Generation
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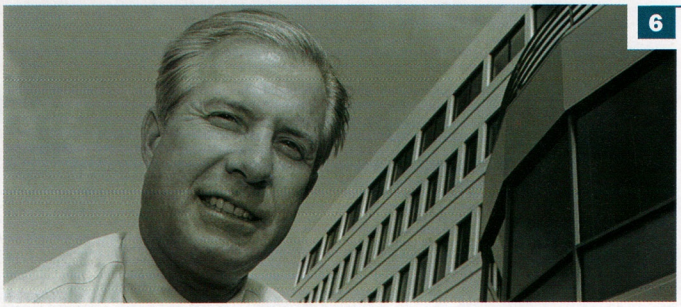
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NEXT Generation (ISSN# 1078-9693) is published monthly by Imagine Publishing, Inc, Suite 210, 1350 Old Bayshore Highway, Burlingame, CA 94010, USA. Application to mail at second-class postage rates pending at Burlingame, CA, and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER** send changes of address to **NEXT Generation**, PO Box 53680, Boulder, CO 80322-3680. Newsstand distribution is handled by Curtis Circulation Company. Subscriptions: one year (12 issues) US $34. Canada: $48. Foreign $58. Canadian price includes postage and GST (GST# R 128 220688).

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Filmed in the United States of America.

NEXT Generation is a controversial new adaptation of the 1995 film **EDGE**. Produced entirely on location in Burlingame, CA. All events are factual.



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Is war hell for Sega?

Out-sold by Sony's PlayStation, out-powered by the imminent Ultra 64, and with little or no third party support, Sega's Saturn is fighting the war to stay alive. But in this exclusive interview, you won't hear Sega of America's President Tom Kalinske talk of defeat



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1995: The calm before the storm?

1995: The year when hype hit reality and the 32-bit war began. Here's a month-by-month look back at one of the most important years in the history of the videogame industry, from when 16-bit ruled the roost, to the launch of Saturn and PlayStation



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1996: The year of the videogame

Each major player in the US videogame business will have its work cut out to make it big in 1996. **NEXT Generation** takes one system at a time and analyzes the challenges faced by each of them, as well as offering its predictions for the year to come



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Matsushita acquires M2 • State of the Industry report — Japanese giants Sony and Sega do battle on US streets • Networked games in the arcade • Ultra 64's plans for Internet gaming



Alphas

Virtua Fighter 2 may singlehandedly save the Saturn • Behind the scenes with Origin • An in-depth look at Sega's AM3 division • Plus *Monster City*, *Ridge Racer Revolution*, *Diablo*, and more



Finals: 50 game reviews

The final word on all the latest releases. If you want hype and advertorial, look elsewhere. If you want to know what's cool and what's not worth the plastic it's encoded on, read us

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Tom Kalinske lines up for a second interview. Where is Saturn now and where is Sega going?

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1995: The calm before the storm
Looking backward at a defining year in the gaming industry when the future of videogames was revealed; a month-by-month retrospective

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1996: The year of the videogame
The future is almost here, but what challenges await each hardware manufacturer in the race for 32-bit dominance? A **NEXT Generation** report

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Alphas
Want to know what you will be playing in the next few months? Read about it first here. Featuring: *Zork: Nemesis* (PC); *Ridge Racer Revolution* (PS-X); *VR Soccer* (PC); *Funky Head Boxers* (arcade); *Marathon 2* (Mac); *Deadly Skies* (Saturn); *Star Fighter* (3DO); *Total NBA* (PS-X); *Monstrous City* (PS-X)

152 rating

Finals
The 32-bit product explosion continues at a breakneck pace, and we have had the pleasure of playing 50 games this month so we can give you a definitive report on their quality. Featured titles include: *Stonekeep* (PC); *Warhawk* (PlayStation); *Magic Carpet 2* (PC); *Gargoyles* (Genesis); *Lost Eden* (3DO); *Twisted Metal* (PlayStation); *Toy Story* (Genesis); *Quarterback Attack* (Saturn); *Goal Storm* (PS-X)

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Show 'em they were wrong when they said playing videogames would never get you anywhere. Hundreds of jobs in the game business on offer

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Next month...
Ultra 64, aka Nintendo's shot at the title

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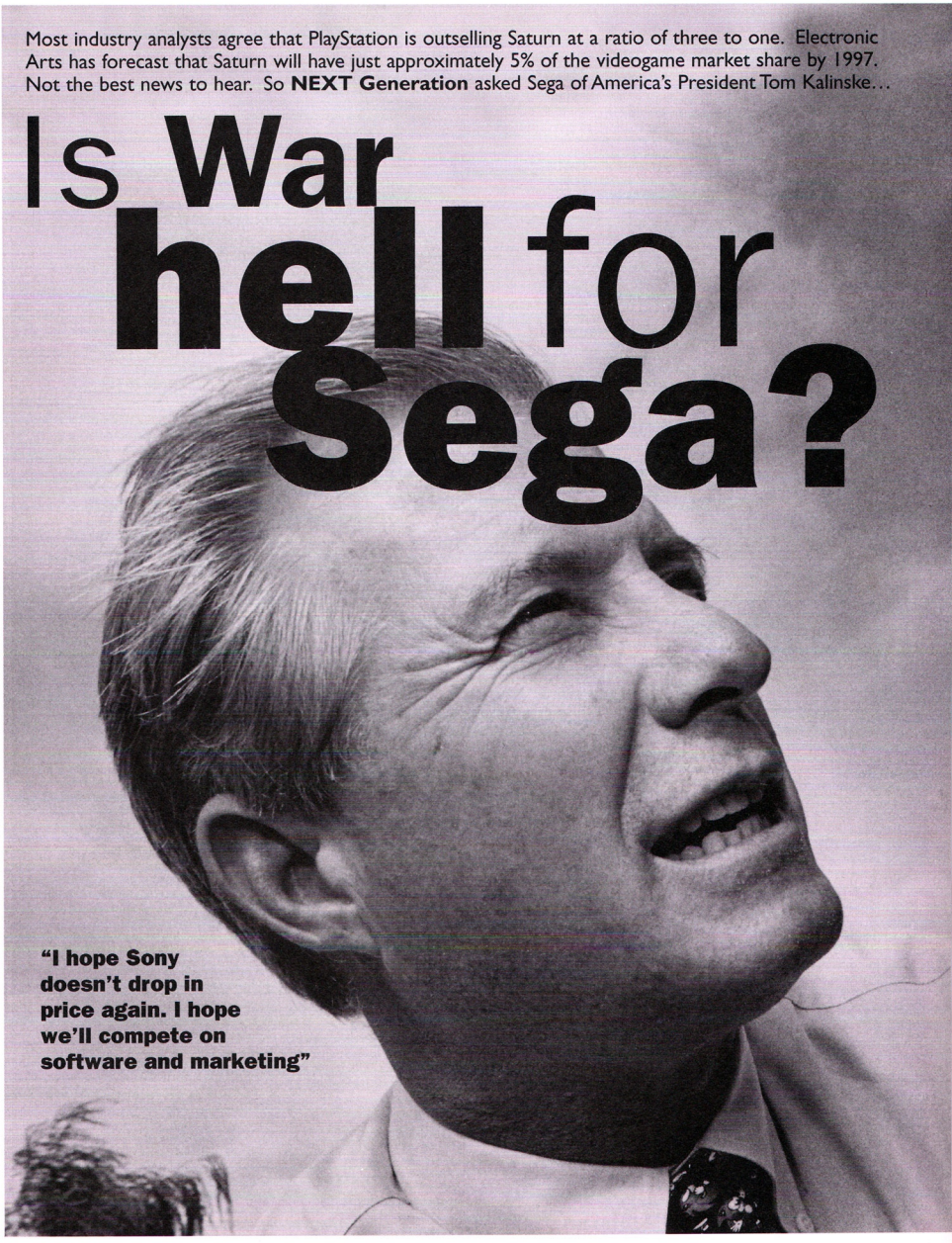
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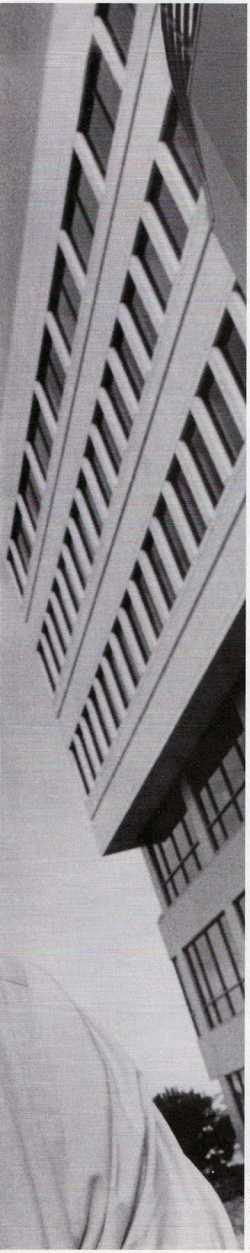


Most industry analysts agree that PlayStation is outselling Saturn at a ratio of three to one. Electronic Arts has forecast that Saturn will have just approximately 5% of the videogame market share by 1997. Not the best news to hear. So **NEXT Generation** asked Sega of America's President Tom Kalinske...

Is War hell for Sega?



"I hope Sony doesn't drop in price again. I hope we'll compete on software and marketing"



Photography Mark Koehler

As the PC and Sony's PlayStation continue to set the pace, the next generation videogame war has already claimed its first victims: Atari is rumored to be abandoning Jaguar and instead concentrating its efforts on developing games for online environments (see page 21); CD-i is out of the picture and Philips is now reluctant to even call it a game machine; and 3DO has given up on its dreams for M2, having sold the exclusive rights to produce the machine for $100 million to Matsushita (see page 18).

Three down. How many more to go?

Sega was always destined to be a major contender in the 32-bit wars. But despite the phenomenal quality of titles such as *Virtua Fighter 2* and *Sega Rally*, Saturn is struggling with sales well below that of its main rival, and virtually no quality third party support.

But Sega is used to fighting from the position of underdog. And Tom Kalinske remains confident of Saturn's future…

Saturn versus PlayStation

NG: Sony is claiming that PlayStation is outselling Saturn. Sega claims that Saturn is outselling PlayStation. The numbers differ depending who you speak to...

Tom: Well that's not unusual! I had a funny conversation with somebody the other day at work. Evidently, Nintendo and ourselves are a billion dollars apart on the size of the market.

NG: The common consensus around the game industry is that more PlayStations were sold (including pre-orders) in its first weekend of sale [September 9] than Saturn had sold up until that point.

Tom: No, no, no, no, no. We sold through 120,000ish units, it must be more than that now. On their first weekend they sold through 75,000 units which is very, very good. Now, by October, they're maybe are up to 100,000 units, maybe 120,000. But they haven't sold more than we've sold.

NG: So, lets get this straight. You're saying that Saturn is ahead of PlayStation.

Tom: I think so, yes — we're still ahead. The numbers I see [smiles] say we are still ahead.

NG: Howard Lincoln of Nintendo (who has to be fairly neutral in the battle between Sega and Sony) said that Nintendo's analysis of retail (TRST) figures was that Sony was way ahead.

Tom: The thing with TRST figures is that no one is entirely sure what percentage of the total market their numbers represent. Some people say it's 50%, some people would say it's 55%, some people would go as high as 60%. So you've got to do a little guesswork in order to get to a total.

So it was close. And I would say this, Sony had a very good launch. There's no question about that.

NG: It was a very aggressive move for Saturn to move from $399 to $299. But surely you have to expect a response, sooner or later, from Sony. Will Sega be able to match a drop to $249?

Tom: It was actually just a drop from $399 to $349 — with the core unit introduced for the first time at $299 — so it's really only been a $50 price reduction. Even though all the ads in the world show it as a $100 reduction.

But I hope Sony doesn't drop in price again. I hope they'll leave us a nice level playing field on price and we'll compete on software and marketing.

NG: Why was PlayStation's launch so much more successful than Saturn's launch?

Tom: Time of year. We launched in May with three retailers. Sony launched in September, during the back-to-school period with a lot more traffic in the stores. We did the surprise guerrilla warfare launch. Sony had the opportunity to plan as you normally would, with a long build up to launch and getting the retailers ready and the consumers ready by PR and advertising.

NG: Were you surprised at Sony's success?

Tom: I was not surprised. At the time we launched our guerrilla launch, I said, "You know they will now beat us in September. We will lose September, possibly October, but then we'll beat them in November and December." So we've been pretty consistent on that. Our whole goal and all our efforts are we've got to beat them in December. And if you can win just December, you win the battle.

"Nintendo used to say, 'Sega is a speck on the TV screen to be destroyed,' or something obscure like that"

NG: Do you still feel that the early launch of Saturn was a good idea?

Tom: Yes I do. We needed to do something a little shocking because we were $100 more than the other guy. We also knew that we were competing against somebody we knew was going to spend so much money on their launch — they are a very wealthy company.

I still think it was a good idea. If I had it to do over again would I do it a little differently? Yeah, definitely. I wouldn't take the risk of annoying retailers the way we did. I would clue them in and do an early launch in a region or three regions or something so we could include everybody. So that part I'd change. But I wasn't that smart then [smiles].

More games on the way?

NG: Traditionally the United States has always been a stronger territory for Sega than Japan. And yet Saturn is doing better in Japan than in the US. Why is that?

Tom: They launched just before Christmas of 1995 in Japan — the biggest sales period. The other factor is that the *Virtua Fighter* phenomena is so much stronger in Japan than it is here. Our job is that we've got to get it as strong in this country as it is in Japan.

NG: Are you hoping to re-create the *Virtua Fighter* craze that's so strong in Japan in the US or to come up with something new?

Tom: Both. We've got to rely on our strengths



As president of Sega of America, it's Tom Kalinske's job to fulfill the wishes of Japan-based Sega Corporation in the US

and we rely a lot right now on translating the AM2 arcade hits to Saturn. That's terrific for us but we've also got to have our Sega original hits.

NG: You mean like *Sonic the Hedgehog* was for Genesis, for instance.

Tom: Sure. And hopefully we can do this with titles like *Bug!*, or the new game coming from the Naka group. You've got to have the right character, but you've also got to have the right play mechanics and it's got to be one of those things — like *Sonic the Hedgehog* — that when you pick it up it just "feels right" and you can play it right from the get go.

Third party support

NG: But you're going to need more than that. You need third party support, and so far this aspect has been very very slow for Saturn.

Tom: Yes, but it's picking up as the developers are learning that they can do better titles on Saturn than what they had on PlayStation.

NG: What evidence to you have of that?

Tom: The evidence I've seen is how *Battle Arena Toshinden* looks on Saturn and it looks a hell of a lot better than it does on PlayStation. So, that's a really good starting point.

NG: That's a tricky example. *Toshinden* is almost a year old and it was completed from scratch for the PlayStation in less than six months. Takara has been working on the Saturn version for more than a year. Do you have another example?

Tom: Well, it still makes the point that you can do superior titles on Saturn.

Right now there are more titles under development for Saturn by third parties than there are on PlayStation. They are both big numbers. I don't remember the exact number, 160 for Saturn, 155 for PlayStation — something like that. So the third party support is coming along.

Where we've been slow is that although our guys here and in Japan have learned tricks and have tools that they've developed to make it easier to develop on Saturn, we haven't passed them on to third party developers yet. We've got to do the educational process to get these tricks out to the third party world.

NG: Fine, but doesn't this contradict one of your earlier marketing thrusts? When Saturn launched, Sega's press material pointed to the fact that Saturn doesn't push an operating system and strict programming guidelines down developer's throats. Instead, it argued that Saturn is "a coder's machine" enabling developers to get "closer to the metal." If Sega said that PlayStation games would be "Schlockware" because of the extensive libraries and OS supplied by Sony, won't the same accusations now be leveled at Saturn games?

Tom: I'm talking about creating games better on Saturn than what developers are able to do on PlayStation.

One of the other things is that you'll never see Sega originals or Sega arcade hits on PlayStation. Whereas everything… actually, 95% of the games on PlayStation will be on Saturn. If you have a choice as a consumer, do you want a machine where you will never be able to play the great arcade hits or the great Sega originals? Or do you want a machine where you can play all the third party things that are currently available on PlayStation, plus the opportunity to play the Sega originals? I think that is pretty compelling.

But I do think that we have been a little slow getting the third parties to understand that they can do better product on the Saturn than they can on PlayStation. We've got to work at it. The problem is right now we are in the heat of getting everything done by Christmas.

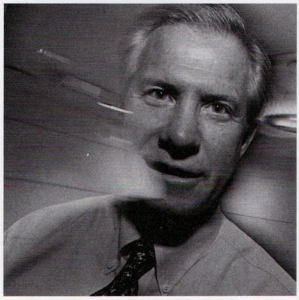
NG: Right, and you've got to make money for Sega before you can start helping anyone else…

Tom: That's something I've been made acutely aware of recently [smiles].

NG: The problem is that Sega is doing all the hard work of making Saturn, manufacturing it and selling it into a very tough market for less than it costs you to make it. So the business model says that you now also have to be the most successful publisher of Saturn games — otherwise you won't make back the money you're losing on the hardware. So on the one hand, you want to help third parties develop a thriving game scene. But on the other hand, you don't want other companies' Saturn games better than Sega's own. How do you deal with these contradictory interests?

Tom: It's actually more of a problem for me than it is for Sega Japan, because Sega Japan gets the preponderance of the royalty income from

"We have been a little slow getting the third parties to understand that they can do better games on the Saturn than they can on PlayStation"



The surprise launch of Saturn — in hindsight — wasn't such a surprise. Tom Kalinske was always careful to speak of Saturn reaching stores "Within six months," as opposed to on a specific date

the third party community. So it's really more of a problem for Sega of America than for Sega "Corporate," if you will. Sega Corporate doesn't care whether the money comes from Sega of America, or EA, or Acclaim or whomever.

History repeats itself?

NG: What parallels can be drawn between the present 32-bit battle between PlayStation and



Saturn and the 16-bit battle between Genesis and Super NES that happened four years ago?

Tom: Of course, with the Genesis we were in the position of having a very aggressive price. Now we have an aggressive price [$299] at the right time — in November and December — when we do most of our business and spend most of our advertising dollars.

In the battle on 16-bit with Nintendo, you can look at the TRST data and it shows that Nintendo usually beats us in February, March, April, May, June, July, August and sometimes September. But they always lose to us in November and December. So I think that parallel is an interesting one for this battle. And what I say to all the people is that September doesn't matter. It's not that it's not important, but it is just 2% of the sales of the whole year.

NG: Is Sony doing to Sega in 1995 what Sega did to Nintendo in 1991?

Tom: Gee, I hope not [laughs]. I can't answer that right now. I don't think they are. I think we have great titles coming and I believe things are building title-wise for the big battle in November and December of this year.

NG: So you don't feel that at last you can sympathize with the way Howard Lincoln [president of Nintendo of America] must have felt when you were beating his company's Super NES with Sega's Genesis in the 16-bit wars?

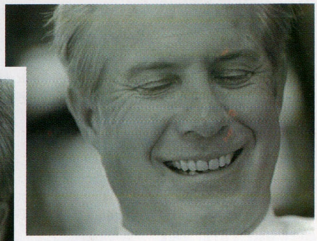
Tom: Not yet. I obviously think about that a lot. Is this history or *deja vu*? I don't think so. At the end of the year we will have sold through more units of hardware and software than Sony has.

Price of Saturn

NG: When we talked last year, the focus was on 32X. And at that time you were very keen to stress the importance of price in fighting a hardware war. In defending 32X you said that "the US has always been very, very, very price driven," and that "to sell huge units of anything — it doesn't matter what — the price has be right." It's obviously a philosophy you believe very strongly in, so it must have been heartbreaking for you to release Saturn at $400.

Tom: I've been very vocal that I wanted it to be at $299, but initially we couldn't do it. Every week I had been arguing for a lower price on Saturn but the manufacturing and production guys couldn't get the price down. In truth, I didn't think we were going to get it till January. I really didn't. I thought I'll keep arguing because I need to and hopefully we'll get it as soon as we can. I thought it would be January and I was quite surprised that we were able to get it down to $299 now. Obviously the competitive pressure didn't hurt. The other thing that didn't hurt was that the yen went up to 103. That helped a whole lot. If the yen stayed at 85 it would have been impossible.





NG: But someone somewhere in a Sega accounting department is having to bite the bullet on the $299 price — you're losing a lot of money selling it that low.

Tom: Oh yes.

NG: Sega of Japan recently announced it was going to produce a Saturn with Internet access built in. Will you bring this to the US?

Tom: I like that idea. I think the Internet is such an interesting phenomenon and if there were more ways of accessing it than just on PCs it would be a positive thing. And we've been working on a similar project here. The Japanese one is of high interest to us. We don't have a prototype of it yet — we're looking forward to getting one, taking it apart, and see how much it's going to cost. But I think that it's a good place to be.

Is Sega getting out of the hardware business?

NG: A lot of people in the game industry are speculating that Sega's long-term goal is to get out of the hardware business and instead just concentrate on making games for all platforms.

"Sega is primarily a software developer and a content provider and that's how we primarily see ourselves. But in the near future, we are stuck with the world as it is"

"Although our guys here and in Japan have learned tricks and have tools that they've developed to make it easier to develop on Saturn, we haven't passed them on to third party developers yet"

Certainly, Sega has been in the game industry for more than 40 years, but has only been manufacturing home hardware for 10 years — so it's not as though manufacturing games hardware is all the company has ever done.

Second, Sega's strength has always been its games, not its hardware. (Oh, by the way, will you acknowledge that Super Nintendo was a better machine than the Genesis)?

Tom: [laughs] Oh no, I can't do that.

NG: ...Anyway. As you yourself said last year, "The two things we do great are make great games and then market them successfully."

Third, right now Sega is in a very tough, expensive fight with Sony, with Nintendo's Ultra 64 due to join the battle soon. It's not the easiest business to be in.

Tom: Sega of America makes all of its money by selling software. Unfortunately, there isn't a way of getting the software of a high enough quality into mass American homes without having to manufacture and sell hardware as well. If there was, I think your premise would be correct.

Certainly, Sega is primarily a software developer and a content provider and that's how we primarily see ourselves, and that will be the direction we are willing to go. But in the near future we are stuck with the world as it is. So we have to make a hardware platform that we can sell our software on. And that's probably true until you get to the year 2000 at which time we may be able to say that there will be some kind of really nifty device to replace the cable box and the VCR and game console and maybe the PC as well. At that point, we can just develop the software for it and it's delivered online, or whatever.

But we're not there. So we don't have a choice but to be a hardware provider.

NG: It must be very frustrating for you. Sega is responsible for the greatest arcade titles in the world, and yet because you also have a hardware business, you can only bring games like *Virtua Fighter* and *Sega Rally* to the home on one system.

Surely if you were a third party, like Electronic Arts, you could publish *Virtua Fighter* on every single platform and make a lot more money than you are making now?



Sega's track record at producing quality software is beginning to pay dividends. Although Saturn is yet to find its *Sonic The Hedgehog*, quality is improving

Tom: We would make a lot more money, right.

NG: So surely it would be better for Sega to ditch the hardware business and sell your games to Atari, to 3DO, to Sony, or whoever?

Tom: But none of them really have — certainly in some cases — a good enough machine, and in other cases not good enough market penetration. So really, that's not an answer either.

But hypothetically, if someone could make a hardware unit and get it into all the homes in this country or into the vast majority of them, would we just want to be a software developer? You bet. But I think it's going to be a while before we see that.

32X

NG: Are you confident that somebody who invested in 32X this time last year feels that Sega delivered the promises it made them?

Tom: No. Hopefully by Christmas they will, but at this point I don't think they do. We're shipping *Virtua Fighter* today. But we needed more games like that out in the stores.

Again on the price issue, if we were at $99 from day one, I think that this would have been a different story — it wouldn't have been the uphill battle that it has been. Now we're at the right price at 32X and we have the right games coming out. And I think there is a valid business there for the guys who just can't afford $299.

NG: How many have you sold?

Tom: We'll be at around 700,000 by December. It's not bad. There will be more 32X machines in homes than either PlayStation or Saturn by this Christmas. But I do understand your point. We have not yet, until shipping *Virtua Fighter*, produced software that took advantage of the accessory.

Saturn's competition

NG: What is your current view the Ultra 64?

Tom: Ultra 64 is going to have titles that are fantastic. They're going to have 40 MB cartridges from Nintendo, or 60 MB or 80 MB or whatever. But I don't know how anyone other than Nintendo can afford to enter this business with the inherent risk. Right now with the cartridge model on 16-bit you've got to be a genius to make money. You make a 15% error in how many you produce and I guarantee you that you'll end up losing money. And who's that smart? How can you call the number of manufacturing that tightly on very expensive titles for an Ultra 64?

I don't doubt they'll have initially some good games on Nintendo and from the companies who they helped to subsidize. But how long does it go on until they come over to a CD format? I think that's the real question.

NG: Do you think that a CD-ROM drive for Ultra 64 is inevitable?

Tom: Yes, and I'll be very surprised if it doesn't come out relatively early in the life of the product.

NG: By Sega's calculations, how much does adding a CD-ROM player to the hardware add to a system's hardware costs?

Tom: Last time I looked — and I'm not an engineer — it was around $70.

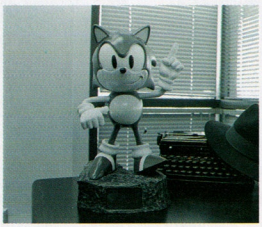
NG: So presumably, this is the prime motive for Nintendo to stick with cartridges right now, because otherwise Ultra 64 could never reach the "below $250" price tag?

Tom: Right, you have to figure that if they are on schedule to come out at $249, and then they added a $70 CD-ROM player, they'd be right up there in price — and cost more than either Saturn or PlayStation.

NG: When do you expect Ultra 64 to launch?
Tom: It depends if you believe their press releases or not. I personally believe that it will be released in the US during the summer of 1996.
NG: Whenever we speak to Nintendo, they say, "Ah yes, Sega. We have great respect to Sega..."
Tom: Really? They used to say, "They are a speck on the TV screen to be destroyed." Or something obscure like that.
NG: But then they say, "...but they've got no cash. How can they compete with us?" They say that you guys have taken a bath the last year or so and that you haven't got the financial muscle to push Saturn to the front of the next generation race.
Tom: Gosh, we're not exactly bereft of cash, but we do make money. Maybe we haven't made as much as Nintendo but we've been a profitable company all along. Banks like us. Investors like us. We can always do stock offerings or bond offerings if we needed a lot more cash, but we haven't really needed these things.

So I really don't know where that comes from or why they say that. We've also been able to compete with them when they've outspent us two-to-one or as much as four-to-one in both marketing and merchandising dollars, and yet we've been able to maintain a market share versus them that is pretty respectable, in my opinion.
NG: Nintendo says that it's not just a matter of being able to compete, it is really just a simple matter of how much cash you have in the bank. For example, they would point to the fact that if you are willing to take an initial loss when selling the game hardware, to make the money back in the long run on software sales — which is the traditional videogame business model — then you have to be able to lose $100 one million times. That's a $100 million dent in the bank account. And that's a lot of money.
Tom: Sure, we have to sell a lot of software to offset that — and there's no question.

But we've seen this business model work well for us in Japan, we've been successful and it's been really pleasant. We have been successful in the Japanese consumer business where we are on an eight to one software to hardware ratio, which is great. Now, if we can come close to that here, in the US, then we'll be in pretty good shape.



NG: So you're not too worried about Ultra 64? You're not losing too much sleep over the threat of Nintendo in 1995?
Tom: Oh I am. I can't say I'm not too worried about it. Any time when you're up against someone as big and experienced — I mean here you have someone who really knows about videogames — you've got to worry about them. And I do think the first games they bring out will be impressive. But how long does it last? Does the consumer eventually have to pay? Rightfully, the consumer should have to pay $100 a game. They certainly won't.
NG: Is it all over for Jaguar?
Tom: [smiles] As an investor in Atari, I hate to comment on that. But I think it's tough for Atari right now, when they have to go up against Sony, Sega, and Nintendo. There's just too much money being spent and too much great software out there. And frankly, I looked at a Jaguar title the other day, a flying game — I can't remember the name of it — and really it looked like a 16-bit game. And it was short.
NG: Whatever happened to Sega publishing Jaguar games?
Tom: There is still work under way on both sides there. I must confess, I'm not able to answer that question right now. But I know there is work under way for our titles to come out on the Jaguar and some of Atari's titles to come out on Genesis or Saturn soon.
NG: What about Trip Hawkins and 3DO? When John Doe walks into a Babbages and says, "What system should I buy?" How do you think the 3DO Multiplayer stacks up?
Tom: I think now that we're at $299 and Sony is at $299 it's tougher for them. It was tough for them before and now it's gotten a little tougher. If you're the average consumer and you see Sony or you see Sega, you probably have more confidence in either one of those than in 3DO.

Trip made a speech the other day. The way I read it, it was an indication he was going to concede the hardware business and move the company toward software for PCs, which sounds like that makes sense for them.
NG: There's been talk for a long time that 3DO was very keen to get a $199 unit out before Christmas. Is this possible for them?
Tom: 3DO? Gee, I hadn't heard that. I'm surprised if that would be possible.

However, if they've already made the hardware and it's sitting in the warehouse and the meter's running, then anything is possible... ng



Having led Sega to victory in the 16-bit battle against Nintendo, Kalinske is in the unique position of being able to see the current war through Sony's eyes

"Hypothetically, if someone could make a hardware unit and get it into all the homes in this country or into the vast majority of them, would we just want to be a software developer? You bet"

STOP PRESS

A couple of weeks after this interview was completed, a couple of new twists in the Sega story unfolded. First, new sales figures confirmed that PlayStation's lead over Saturn in the US was increasing (see page 14). But then came the completion of *Virtua Fighter 2* by Sega AM2 and *Sega Rally* by AM3 for the Saturn. Both games are exceptional, and both offer fine testament to Saturn's previously unseen power. As one developer commented, "This changes everything... *IF* Sega is able to share their secrets with the rest of the industry." We shall have to wait and see...

CAPTAIN QUAZAR ONLY ON 3DO GOLDEN GATE: TREASURE BY THE BAY ONLY ON 3DO PH

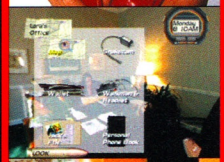
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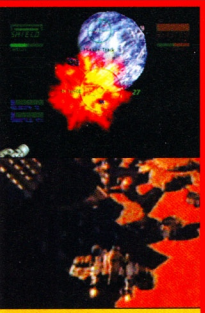
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3DO, the 3DO logos, BattleSport, Captain Quazar, Golden Gate: Treasure by the Bay, Phoenix 3, Snow Job and Star Fighter are trade-

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IX 3 ONLY ON 3DO BATTLESPORT ONLY ON 3DO STAR FIGHTER ONLY ON 3DO SNOW JOB ONLY ON 3DO CAPTAIN QUAZAR ONLY ON 3DO GOLDEN GATE: TREASURE BY THE BAY



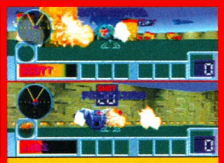
PHOENIX3™







Like great space combat and bitchin' weapons? So do we. As hero Derek Freeman, you must locate starships and brave pilots to fight some surly aliens. Of course, that entails shooting the green snot out of them. Can't we all live in peace and harmony? In a word, no.



BATTLESPORT™

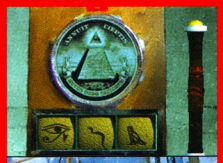


Arena football meets General Patton. You choose a tank. You load up on firepower. You enter the arena. You try to score goals while opponents try to blast you to hell and back. It's a sport where a cup doesn't offer much protection.





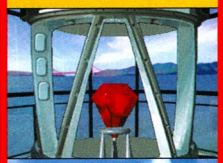


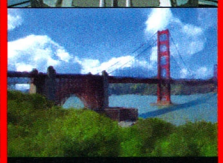






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ONLY ON 3DO CAPTAIN QUAZAR ONLY ON 3DO GOLDEN GAT

3DO WE GOT IT. THEY DON'T.

Sega vs. Sony: A state of the industry report talks to store owners and analysts about the battle between Sony and Sega on the streets of the US/**p.14** • **M2:** Matsushita buys 3DO's killer license. What's next?/**p.18** • **Ultra 64:** Nintendo prepares for the Internet/**p.22** • **Movers and Shakers:** Christopher Sherman gets the skinny on the industry/**p.25**



Leading edge computer and videogame news

Sony fights Sega on US streets

Saturn versus PlayStation is the talk of game stores across the US. But who's winning the war?

The extraordinary 32-bit hardware war is finally being fought across the US with Sony's PlayStation taking an early and commanding lead.

As of late November, Sony has claimed to have achieved an installed base of 200,000 machines already, while Sega has claimed figures of no more than 120,000. While manufacturer figures are notoriously difficult to trust, these figures tally remarkably with our own findings.

We contacted 25 specialist game stores chosen at random across the country. All but one reported that the PlayStation was outselling the Saturn. The ratio of sales varied from two-to-one to an astonishing 12-to-one. However, in the first four weeks of the PlayStation's availability, we estimate a four-to-one ratio is a fair estimate.

A strong start for

PlayStation was only to be expected given the amount of pent-up desire among gameplayers for the new machine. Sony is naturally extremely pleased with its performance. Sega disputes its rival's claims and points to a number of factors which may swing the pendulum back in its favor in the coming weeks. Chief among these are the new $299 prices, a television advertising campaign which has just been launched, and the imminent availability of arcade hits such as *Virtua Fighter 2* and *Sega Rally* exclusively for the Saturn.

In the absence of any concrete sales figures, it is often best to rely on first-hand reports from those on the front lines of the war — not those bunkered back at the HQs. That means talking to the stores themselves. Most sellers of videogame equipment belong to powerful chains such as Babbages, Toys R Us, and Electronics Boutique.



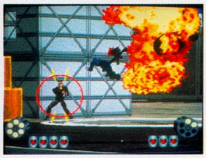
PlayStation benefited from being the recommendation of the majority of US store managers and assistants





Games like *Toshinden* helped Sony overtake Sega in September





Sega's latest batch of arcade conversions (*VF2*, *Sega Rally*, and the arcade-perfect *Virtua Cop*) helped steal back some of Sony's advantage



PlayStation is expected to drop to $249 or lower when Ultra 64 launches



Will Saturn be able to match the price? Experts think it's unlikely

"There is a slight preference to Saturn among Sega people, but on the whole people say they prefer the graphics and gameplay elements of PlayStation. Quite often they rent both machines first before making a decision."

Store Manager, Michigan

Individual store managers in the front line of the 32-bit battle are not allowed to speak to the press, therefore we have had to conceal the identities of our sources. What follows are a selection of quotes from store managers (possibly the best people to comment on the emerging situation):

- "A good mix of young adults, teenagers, and parents are buying these game machines. We find that when a parent comes in cold, without much knowledge, they tend to decide on PlayStation. Some of that is due to our saying that it is a better machine and some to do with the fact that Sony has got the message out there, there is a lot of information [on it] out right now." — New York
- "There is a tiny preference for Saturn among Genesis owners, but the opinion of the salesman is very influential and will get more so as parents start coming in to buy gifts for the holidays." — South Carolina
- "We are selling PlayStations at a rate of five-to-one against the Saturn, with Saturn sales dropping off when the PS-X arrived. We get a lot of younger kids coming in wanting a 32-bit machine, but their parents won't spend the money, so our customers are generally older." — California
- "There is a slight preference to Saturn among Sega people, but on the whole, people say they prefer the graphics and gameplay elements of PlayStation games. Quite often they rent both machines first before making a decision." — Michigan
- "We're selling PlayStation at a rate of 12-to-one of Saturn, but that's maybe because when people ask I generally say that I own a PlayStation myself. The only complaint so far has been that the release dates of PlayStation games are being pushed back." — Arkansas
- "The surprising thing is that people who used to gripe about spending $150 on a Super NES are coming in and spending $300 to $400. Most people buy at least two games and



Sega's Tom Kalinske is confident that Sega can win the war, but denies that Sony is currently ahead (page 6)

Advertainment

NEXT Generation's showcase for worldwide recognition of videogame advertising. Sony goes retro for its hi-tech baby

Company: **Sony**
Product: **PlayStation**
Date: **Oct. 1995**
Origin: **UK**















After months of speculation and rumor, Sony's killer console has arrived, and with it an unusual advertising campaign.:

1. We are introduced to the S.A.P.S. (Society against PlayStation) logo. Inside the S.A.P.S. building (the spokesman, a squeaky clean goodie-goodie dweeb, pulls on his protective rubber gloves.
2. He enters a retro-suburban '50s household. Teenagers innocently play patti-cake in the background.
3. The spokesman whips out his bagel toaster (which happens to be the PlayStation). In the background, the parents' jaws drop with shock and disgust.
4. Cut to a testing lab, where a mouse has been subjected to PlayStation's power (the rodent subsequently self destructs)
5. This is a healthy young man (a pasty nerdy character).
6. And this is what happens after playing with PlayStation (the chimp grins inanely).
7. "Never underestimate the power of PlayStation," says S.A.P.S. spokesman in closing, finishing with a ridiculous salute.

And there you have it, ladies and gentlemen. Proof that the British are as mad as ever.





Namco's *Ridge Racer* (top) and Takara's *Toshinden* (above)





Sega's *Sega Rally* (top) and the awesome *Virtua Fighter 2* (above)

Battle of the software

Of course, people don't desire game hardware. They desire whatever it takes to run the games they want to play.

Right now, the common consensus of opinion is that Sega's *Virtua Fighter 2* and *Sega Rally* are superior to Sony's *Toshinden* and *Ridge Racer*. When looking at the bigger picture, however, it is important to consider that this comparison is between Sony's first-generation software and Sega's second-generation efforts. Sony will no doubt fight back.

then about three quarters of them buy a memory card as well." — Florida

• "Everyone is reading up and asking lots of questions. They are taking their time to make a decision." — Virginia

• "We are selling PlayStations at five to one. Some people were saying that they wanted to sell their Saturns, but when I said that *VF2* was coming they changed their minds." — Nevada

The following trends are also backed up by all retailers polled:

• While purchasers of the machines come from across the social spectrum, there is a clear bias toward sophisticated men between the ages of 17 and 25. More than 85% of 32-bit buyers already own either a Genesis or a Super NES.

• Most people buy at least two games at the point of purchase. *Ridge Racer* and *Battle Arena Toshinden* are the most popular. Both are selling as many units as PlayStation itself, which suggests everyone is buying them.

• In the height of post-launch excitement many store managers were recommending PlayStation to their customers. Some of the more enthusiastic sales people were therefore hardly selling any Saturns.

• Nearly 75% of PlayStation owners are buying the memory card straight away and up to half are buying the extra controller.

• Late in our survey many reported a slowing of PlayStation's dominance as news seeped out about the excellent quality of Sega's new generation of games — *Sega Rally*, *Virtua Fighter 2*, and *Virtua Cop*, in particular.

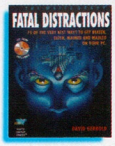
Two things can be read into the results of the first four weeks of PlayStation. The first is that the machine will not have it so good again. The line goes that Saturn's good name has been re-established by the new keener price and by those great games. Certainly, the war was always going to be fought on the quality of combat and driving games. Many feel that *Toshinden*/ *Ridge Racer* has now been matched if not surpassed by *Virtua Fighter 2*/ *Sega Rally*.

The other is that Sony has enjoyed such a commanding and early lead that it's already reached a critical mass. As one retailer put it: "Pretty soon everyone will know someone with a PlayStation. It all builds upon itself."

Next Generation is inclined to believe that while Saturn may never enjoy as large an audience as PlayStation, it's probable that sales ratios will close between the two in the months ahead. ng

Essential reading

Fatal Distractions



David Gerrold
Publisher: Waite Group Press
$26.95 (incl. disc) ISBN: 1-878739-77-8
173 pages

Lets face it, there are multitudes of books available about games — not even including the hefty libraries in the strategy/tips genre. So what sets the others apart?

This title's atypical angle is author David Gerrold's depth of knowledge about the history of the industry, including unusual and colorful anecdotes about actual developers, and the well chosen set of titles that fill the attached game disc. Wisely, Gerrold stays true to his word when he explains these titles were chosen based on playability (which he actually defines in a seven-point disclaimer), and that's where the disc comes in.

Playable are at least 73 different games ranging from the parameters of all gaming categories — text adventures, dungeons, pac mazes, puzzles, strategy, action adventures, shooters, fighters, you name it — and all are shareware and freeware, including Softwork's Adventure Game Toolkit, which enables you to develop your own adventure games.

The unfortunate side of this wonderful book is that Saturn and PlayStation games are now packing shelves with gorgeous 3D titles eons ahead of the games in this disc, and it seems a shame that an inexpensive resource such as this would be overlooked. If you can't shell out the bucks for the new 32-bit systems, then take a look at this, it won't be a mistake.

Games on the Internet



Scott Taves
Publisher: Sybex
$12.99, ISBN: 0-7821-1694-9
190 pages

It's funny that a book like this — one about where to find games on the Internet — has been published at all, seeing as how most of the fun of the Internet is the actual discovery of the sites. But much in the same way magazines are still enormously informative and educational for people (for subjects like er, uh, videogames), books are still invaluably useful for guiding people around the information highway.

Games on the Internet is packed with web sites. Invaluable sites are listed for *Marathon*, *Dark Forces*, *Doom*, *Heretic*, *Descent*, and more; and when we last checked, a few addresses had been changed, but 95% were still right on the money. Services like DWANGO — a national service for modem *Doom*, *Doom 2*, and *Heretic* — are listed, and the author exhaustively reports many different addresses on the same game.

This book was good in an all-around kind of way, but frankly, we'd rather surf the Net than read about it.



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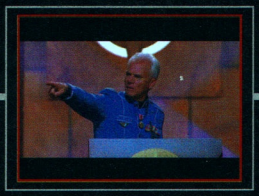




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Matsushita buys 3DO M2 technology

Trip Hawkins' dream of driving forward a global interactive standard dies as M2 is purchased by his partner

There is no doubt that Matsushita has the power to stage a 64-bit version of what Sony has achieved with 32-bit in 1995

The balance of power in the videogame hardware business shifted measurably when Matsushita Electrical Industrial Co., Ltd. paid $100 million for the exclusive rights to 3DO's M2 3D graphics technology. The deal, which cedes virtually all rights to the technology to Matsushita, harbors the potential to bring the consumer electronics giant to the forefront of the videogame hardware business in the next 18 months as products ship.

So encompassing is the agreement that title developers interested in making games for M2 will have to work with Matsushita rather than Trip Hawkins and 3DO.

This means that 1996 will play host to the launch of two 64-bit machines — Nintendo's Ultra 64 and the Matsushita M2 — assuming that the consumer electronics giant does indeed plan to release a dedicated game machine based on M2 technology. The prospect still could remain that Matsushita license the M2 technology to other manufacturers in the fashion of the original 3DO unit. That technology was used in machines from Matsushita itself (under the Panasonic brand) and by Lucky GoldStar.

The 3DO company, which many felt was drifting, has pocketed $100 million from the deal (to be paid in installments) which it will use to bolster its publishing efforts and to explore new technologies — in other words, 3DO is essentially a new company.

Matsushita granted back to 3DO a nonexclusive license for coin-operated arcade games, PC applications, general computing, and software development tools. It also retains the rights to develop upgrades to M2 (it's already talking M3 and M4) and to use M2 technology to make graphic cards for PCs. However, until these products come to market, 3DO is now for practical purposes a software development house.

Matsushita says it will manufacture a variety of consumer-oriented M2 products including 64-bit videogames, Digital Video Disc (DVD) players (expected at a later date), and interactive TV set-top boxes. The system's release in Japan is supposedly scheduled for the second half of 1996; no price has been set yet. The Japan-based company also intends to sub-license the M2 technology and is currently in discussions with several potential partner companies and is likely to expand the M2 alliance over the course of the next two years.

Commentators believe one of two scenarios will most likely emerge: Matsushita will go it alone with an M2 machine priced aggressively against Nintendo's Ultra 64. It will back this up with a Sony-style marketing and development campaign. 3DO partner Lucky Goldstar may be permitted to manufacture and market an upgrade to its 3DO MultiPlayer. The second scenario could see the firm following the unique 3DO model and seeking to achieve domination by sub-licensing M2 to other manufacturers including GoldStar and, just possibly, Sega.

For 3DO owners this deal is the best news possible. There had been grave doubts that 3DO might not have the financial power to bring M2 to market. There is no doubt that Matsushita has the power to stage a 64-bit version of what Sony has achieved this year.



It is expected that Trip Hawkins will now return to doing what many say he does better than anyone else in the business — running a software publishing empire



Essentially, Matsushita paid $100 million for the designs of some chips. It is fine testament to the skill of M2's creators

M2







M2 software is beginning to surface, despite there being no development kits: *IronBlood* (top), Studio 3DO's in-house race game (middle), *Clayfighter 3* (below)

"I guarantee that when we launch this machine there will be software ready."

William Gardner, Panasonic

Matsushita is the biggest consumer electronics company in the world. In recent years it has seen its business in the areas of household applications flatten, while its new technologies have soared. The videogame market is a tempting prospect, especially given Sony's recent and, so far, successful incursion. Also, Matsushita has vowed to establish a Digital Video Disc standard (which will enable you to watch movies from CDs). One would expect Matsushita to leverage the new technology in many areas in order to justify the surprisingly large initial investment in M2.

But for now, Matsushita is remaining tight-lipped about plans. A spokesman from its Tokyo HQ told **NEXT Generation**: "The details of the arrangement have not been finalized. Everything is being decided right now and will be made in the future."

At its US subsidiary Panasonic Vice President William Gardner said: "I guarantee that when we launch this machine there will be software ready. We have some great games in development covering everything from RPGs and strategy to sports and driving." Let's hope so.

At The 3DO Company, marketing chief Bob Lyndsey suggested that a price for the new machine could be pitched against the current prices of 32-bit systems like PlayStation. "You are going to see the potential of 64-bit machines at comparable prices to 32-bit systems but with an increase in power by a factor of seven to 10. If you are offered that choice at the same price, what are you going to do?" In an extraordinary attack, Lyndsey went on to argue that the 32-bit generation was already doomed (see page 64). An interesting statement from the pioneers of 32-bit gaming.

Data stream

Total messages posted by members of the alt.fan.oj-simpson newsgroup in the 24 hours before the verdict: **More than 1,000**

Number of videgames submitted to the VCS under the voluntary rating system from Sept. '94 to Sept. '95 that were deemed suitable for all ages: **79.5%**

Projected percentage of total CD game sales taken by infotainment-style titles in 1995: **2.17%**

Shoot-em-up titles: **23.85%**

Amount of time that Star Trek appears on tv screens worldwide: **every hour of the day**

Full capacity of visitors able to pass through Disneyland Paris' Space Mountain in one hour: **2400**

Number of Belgian households with electronic deep fat friers in 1990: **84.8%**

Number with PCs: **30.9%**

Number of consumers worldwide that had commercial home accounts with an Internet service provider in 1993: **230,000**

Projected for the year 2000: **74,756,500**.

Number of Hungarians on the waiting list to be connected to a telephone line, summer 1995: **600,000**

Number of lego bricks used to build Lego Land in Denmark: **38,000,000**

Estimated ratio of pirated software titles to original software sold in Spain: **12:1**

Capcom interim net profits to Sept.: 1995: **¥50,000,000**

Capcom interim net profits to March: 94: **¥7,300,000,000**

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Atari drops Jaguar?

Atari says no to Virtuality, hi to the PC, and goodbye to its internal game development staff

With rumors circulating throughout the videogame industry concerning the future of the company, Atari's VR deal with Virtuality has fallen through.

The agreement, set up in late 1994, was for Virtuality to develop a low-cost consumer head-mounted display for Atari, to be compatible with the Jaguar console. Exact details as to why the deal has been abandoned have not been released as of yet, suffice to say, it's gone.

"What Atari appears to be up to is the abandonment of the Jaguar in favor of becoming a development house for the PC."

anonymous source, quoted in *IG Online*

Then In November, UK newspaper *The Sunday Times*, possibly reacting to the *VR News* article, put forward that Atari plans to give up on the Jaguar in favor of PC development — a theory that Atari strongly refutes. *The Sunday Times* article is not the only piece of speculation regarding Atari's commitment to hardware to have appeared in the media over the last two weeks. In a recent news article *IG Online* quoted a "reliable source within the Jaguar community" as saying, "What Atari appears to be up to is the abandonment of the Jaguar in favor of becoming a PC development house. However, it is very busy right now pushing the remaining stock of Jaguar hardware." Internal sources also indicated to *IG* that wide-scale lay-offs have been carried out by Atari USA, including almost the entire internal software development dept.

Official Atari rumor control has gone into overdrive on both sides of the Atlantic to clarify the situation. Atari's UK spokesman also claims that the redundancies spoken of by *IG*'s source were restricted to a single game development team at Atari USA. That's not, however, what some ex-employees of Atari are saying.

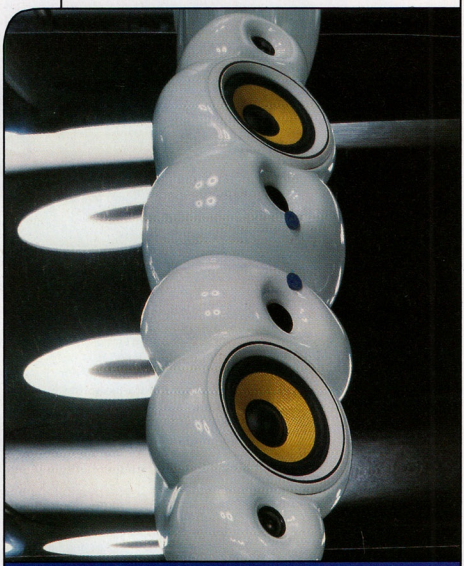
Whatever the case may be, the question remains, is Atari in the process of attempting to re-invent itself? And if so, has it chosen the right direction in which to move? Given Atari's difficulties in competing with companies such as Namco and Sega in the past, it is, by no means guaranteed success the second time around, albeit in an entirely new market. ig



Given slow sales and ever-increasing competition, it has long been predicted that Atari will give up on Jaguar

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Ultra 64 prepares for Internet access

Nintendo is planning to hook up its 64-bit machine for on-line gaming

Nintendo Japan is once again planning a foray into online gaming. The firm is in discussions with Netscape Communications and is planning to launch a system in which games playing would be linked via modem to a central resource and to other players.

Any deal will give users of the forthcoming Ultra 64 access to a huge array of new possibilities. Although pure online gaming would not be possible due to the restrictions of the phone system, it would enable a variety of new functions.

Multiplayer games

would be possible among users who own the same game. Their machines could be linked up while the Internet provider simply updates moves and score. Access and cheat codes could be accessed by the modem. Players who are hopelessly stuck in a game would get help by pressing a button. Games could have built in hidden levels or characters which would be released, for example, on a given date. This would give games a longer life and could act as a powerful marketing tool.

Players could use the Internet connection as a kind of huge options menu. This would offer the power to reconfigure games to personal tastes and preferences. It would also offer Nintendo the chance to monitor how its games are being played. Nintendo's prospective partner, Netscape Communications, is the world leader in Internet browser software and would be the ideal partner in such a venture.

Nintendo Japan

has previously attempted to set up online systems. In 1988 the company launched an initiative to make 8-bit NES machines not just games consoles, but also tools for accessing information and doing business. The idea never caught on partly because adults felt uncomfortable using what was perceived as a toy for serious applications.

And earlier this year the firm launched the Satellaview add-on for the Super NES which gave users access to a satellite channel offering game cheats and demos as well as general entertainment features.

Not surprisingly Nintendo is remaining tight-lipped about the news of its discussions with Netscape. A spokesperson offered: "Nintendo has not announced any deal. It is all speculation. Of course a big company like Nintendo talks to many companies but that's not to say that a deal won't happen. It's just that nothing has happened as of yet."

The news almost certainly means that the Ultra 64 will come with either memory card capabilities or built-in RAM (with which to save out changes via the modem) as well, of course, as a modem port. ng

NETSCAPE



Netscape is the premiere WWW-browser used in the US. Now it's working with Nintendo's Ultra 64



Gratuitous plug: Netscape also enables access to NG's own web page: http://www.imagine-inc.com/ng/



Although Nintendo refuses to officially confirm that its deal with Netscape will result in a game service, it is clear that the deal is centered in Japan with no plans for a US version

Daily NG Game News

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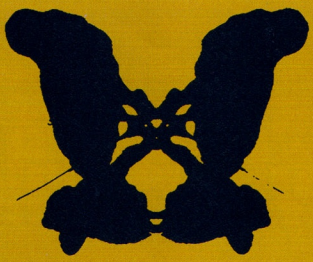
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A monthly look at **business news** affecting the **gaming world**

by **Christopher Sherman**



Christopher V. Sherman is the publisher of MMWIRE, the leading daily news service on the business of interactive entertainment. MMWIRE ONLINE can be found at http://www.mmwire.com

NEXT GENERATION FORCED TO MOVE TO THE NEXT LEVEL

NEWSLINE: PC gaming hardware continues to push forward with new capabilities and additional horse power. Intel Corp. took the wraps off of its 150 MHz Pentium Pro processor the first week in November And on the digital video disc front Toshiba (Japan) says it will target the US market before the Japanese market, launching DVD players ($600-$700) and DVD CD-ROM drives ($250-$300) September 1996. DVD will enter the market as prices of Pentium Pro PCs begin floating down to more palatable consumer price points. Compaq, Hewlett-Packard and others begin shipping units in December and early 1996 with prices starting at $4,000. In other hardware news, new 3D offerings continue to come forth. Jazz Multimedia, Inc. introduced 3D Magic (at $239 for Windows), a new line of integrated 3D multimedia accelerators based on Nvidia's chip technology. Providing wavetable music synthesis and MPEG playback acceleration, 3D Magic doubles as a Windows 95 graphics accelerator.

BOTTOMLINE: The next generation PC videogame platform will look much different one year from today. (Save this issue to see if we're right.) Will you be playing *Mortal Kombat IV* on your 200 MHz Pentium Pro off a DVD CD-ROM drive? Could be. As of this writing there are no Pentium Pro's or DVD CD-ROM drives in the marketplace, but with mega companies like Intel and Toshiba backing this kind of technology, you can expect that the it's well on its way. You may be paying $4,000 or more for that souped up PC game system, but you'll have more power under the hood than you'll know what to do with. Sony has not yet formally committed to DVD for PlayStation but with the PC committed, videogame platforms will have to adopt the technology to compete.



Although the deal isn't set just yet, in the future you may be playing games like *MK4* with a Pentium Pro chip off a DVD CD-drive

TOTAL ENTERTAINMENT SIGNING DEALS

NEWSLINE: The Total Entertainment Network continues to sign deals. TEN signed with Spectrum HoloByte Inc. an exclusive agreement for the rights to *Falcon 4.0* on the TEN online service. The title will be available in late 1996. Additional Spectrum titles will also be available. As previously reported the company has deals in place with Strategic Simulations Inc., Apogee Software Ltd., and others. TEN also signed with Domark Software to offer *Big Red Racing* on the TEN network.

BOTTOMLINE: The guys at TEN, through the licensing agreements they are signing, are in the process of creating an online gaming powerhouse. If all goes as planned these guys will have launched the TEN service by the time you read this. And while there is certainly competition waiting in the wings, if these guys can pull off a fast, convenient service with a variety of offerings, they'll be the early frontrunners.



TEN signed a deal with Spectrum Holobyte for exclusive rights for *Falcon 4.0* to appear on its online service

ACCLAIM ACQUIRES PROBE AND SCULPTURED, BOLSTERS TALENT POOL

NEWSLINE: In two acquisitions designed to lock-up additional talent, Acclaim Entertainment has purchased Probe Entertainment Ltd. (UK) and Sculptured Software, Inc. in separate stock swaps. In addition to talent, each company has also developed a range of proprietary hardware and software authoring technologies.

BOTTOMLINE: Acclaim has often been accused as being long on marketing and distribution and short on development talent and know-how (ie lots of licenses, but lots mediocre games). These acquisitions may change all of that as Acclaim gears up to begin delivering games developed in-house, rather than out-of-house. Combined with the company's distribution and marketing capabilities, Acclaim has succeeded in positioning itself to compete in the months to come. The acquisitions, which bring an additional 250 programmers, musicians, graphic artists, and engineers, follow Acclaim's purchase of Iguana Entertainment earlier this year. ng

The guys at TEN, through the licensing agreements they are signing, are in the process of creating an online gaming powerhouse

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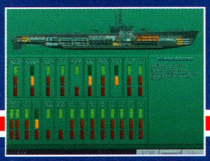
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by Bernard Yee

You might think from America OnLine, CompuServe, and Prodigy TV commercials that having a PC or a Macintosh is the only way to leap into the ether known as cyberspace. Having a computer may be the best way to get online, but by no means is it the only way. While Sony PlayStation is riding the rocket in the 32-bit game console market, there are still tons of 16-bit Genesis and Super NES users out there. A huge market, and that's what media giant Blockbuster Video was thinking when it launched Catapult Entertainment and XBand.

XBand is a gaming network like no other — it supports two-player gaming for console platforms, the Genesis and Super NES — the only one to do so. While PC gamers can lock horns on DWANGO or AOL, console gamers have nowhere else to go. The games that run on XBand are few but popular: Genesis gamers can play *Madden NFL 95*, *NBA Jam*, *NHL 95*, *NBA Live 95*, *Mortal Kombat I* and *II*, and *Super Street Fighter II*; Super NES games include all these but *Mortal Kombat I* and *NBA Live 95*.

XBand — widely available at places like Blockbuster Video Stores (surprise!) — includes a modem for only about $29.99. It sounds cheap, but some industry observers think that 28.8k bps — that's more than 10 times the speed of the XBand modem — will drop to around $100 in 1996. The modem plugs into the cartridge slot, and the game cart plugs into the modem. Of course, the game has to be designed to support XBand, and you need your own copy to play. Once on, you'll be rated and ranked according to how well you take apart all those punks who think they can beat you.

Luckily, the kind of games that are on XBand don't require the transmission of vast amounts of data, so 2,400 bps seems to be adequate for the limited purpose of playing head-to-head cart games. The trick here is to use both console machines to process the action (simultaneously and in synchronization) — and fighting games only need to zap the keypad strokes across the lines.

XBand has worked hard to reduce latency (the time it takes the XBand service to process the data and send it back, which is different from data transfer rate) as well as keeping the two gamers' consoles in sync. There are no multiplayer (more than two gamers, anyway) games on XBand yet. The only way you'll see three or four player support is if the game itself supports it (a distinct possibility with the Sony platform). And XBand has been working with as many developers as possible to include the XBand API (the programming interface enabling the game to interface with XBand).

I've been getting e-mail from XBand members (with unappetizing e-mail addresses like U_555555555_12_A@xband.com) to cover XBand — which is amazing in itself since these subscribers actually furiously manipulated their gamepads to use an onscreen keyboard to write the e-mail! But surfing the Net is as difficult at 2,400 bps as counting grains of sand on the beach, and almost impossible without a keyboard — as I've said before.

Catapult's plan is to give users a cheap keyboard for $30 which represents a good investment if you want to send electronic mail through XBand. But keyboards have never been popular with console gamers — can anyone remember the Intellivision from Coleco? That was a bigger bomb than *Water World*. At least XBand provides its own online newspaper (two of them actually) to keep its members up to date. Good thing too, since XBand won't give you access (not yet, anyway) to USENET or the Web — so the younger console audience will have to look elsewhere for alt.sex.hellokitty and http://www.nakedladies.com... Of course, spine-dismemberment via *MK* is always an option...

Membership has been growing (quadrupled since June) so the chances of finding opponents online are getting easier and better. XBand costs a reasonable $9.95/month for unlimited connections, or $4.95/month for the first 50 link-ups, with each additional connection only .15¢; there's a $2.95 one time setup fee.

Catapult's big money backing means that XBand is unlikely to fade away, even as the 16-bit platforms become eclipsed by the big iron from Sony, Nintendo, and Sega. One XBand strategy — in the near term — is to provide support for the Sony PlayStation, Nintendo Ultra 64, and Sega Saturn in 1996. XBand also sees the future of online gaming in the PC market, and plans to expand XBand to include PCs as well, having talked to Intel, Id, and Activision.

Beyond that? Well, the Sega Channel — which uses cable to download games to your Genesis — has been working with Catapult to provide a cable-based online gaming service. Don't hold your breath, though; cable hasn't been upgraded to handle two-way communications, though a dual input/output system can be implemented to download bits through the cable to the user, and upload your own information through the telephone system. This is an excellent way to browse the World Wide Web, which requires lots of downloading of data — graphics, text, and even sound — but almost never requiring users to upload the same volume of information.

XBand users may have the last laugh in web-surfing ease while PC owners wait for ISDN — or at least, cable modems. If you're a console owner and want to send e-mail or play over the phones, XBand is your only option. Literally. Call 1 (800) X4-XBAND to order.

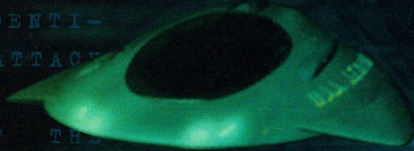
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Arcadia

News and updates from the arcade, theme park, and coin-op industry by one of its key insiders



Marcus Webb is the editor-in-chief of *RePlay* magazine, the US' leading trade amusement magazine

by **Marcus Webb**



Multiplayer gaming is successfully demonstrated by Sega's *Daytona USA*



Neo-Geo plans to bring networked, multiplayer gaming to the arcades



***Mortal Kombat 3*. Not the best game in the world, but still an arcade hit**

Networks **A-poppin'**

At least 21 US, Canadian, European, and Japanese firms are now doing research and development for download or network type entertainment projects, aimed at arcades and/or other commercial locations (family entertainment centers, theme parks, etc). Some of these systems are for music-on-demand and electronic darts, but the videogame list is hefty all by itself. Among the contenders: Sega, Namco, SNK, Incredible Technologies, American Laser Games, NTN Communications, and one other major manufacturer, as well as the National Amusement Network (NANI). Those are just the ones we presently know about, and it's a darn good bet there are several more coin-op factories pursuing this sort of thing which we don't know about (yet).

Japan Seeks Videogame Downloading and **Remote Interactive Gameplay**

According to industry insider John Ryan in Japan, "Namco is presently involved in the NTT (Nippon Telephone & Telegraph) Multimedia Experiment with the aim of developing technology to download coin-op software to arcades by satellite or through the telephone lines. The time frame is three to four years, according to Namco. This would eliminate the need for printed circuit boards and reduce the cost of games. Such satellite technology is already used extensively in *Karaoke* bars (in Japan) and Sega is testing a downloading system for consumer games. Likely to bear fruit in the short-term is linking units from one location to another.

"Sega has been developing ISDN technology for this purpose since 1993 and tested it with its popular driving game *Daytona USA*. At this year's JAMMA Show, SNK previewed its Super Neo 29 where the cabinet has a small sub-monitor above the demo screen showing the face of the competitor in the other arcade."

Sega's Next **Fun Center**

Sega Enterprises USA will create a 27,000 sq. ft. "interactive entertainment center" at The Meridian in Seattle, WA, to open in July 1996. Sega Enterprises president Al Stone promised "a constant influx of new experiences" from its busy R&D labs, and that means simulators, virtual reality, and theme park-style rides. Other participants in the project are a 10-screen Cineplex Odeon movie theater complex, a 27,000 sq. ft. "Nike Town" attraction, and a Planet Hollywood theme restaurant. An on-site Sega merchandising store will be part of the mix. Sega plans to open "at least" 150 massive entertainment centers in North America by the year 2000. As this column reported last month, Sega's arcade and coin-op video division is being folded into a joint venture with MCA-Universal and DreamWorks SKG for this purpose.

Incredible Technologies Vows **"Networked"** Videogame **Tournament** System

The first videogame to be networked for tournament play in arcades across the US could be *Peter Jacobsen's Golden Tee 3D Golf* from Chicago-based manufacturer Incredible Technologies. It's successfully demonstrated its new videogame tournament networks already. After some more tests and logistics, IT plans to roll the system out for general use next year. Using standard phone lines, the system downloads tourney data to IT's central HQ and uploads current network-wide loading scores to individual machines in arcades the same way. It's a less ambitious program than the NANI network which we've previously reported on; and that's why it may be first to hit the market.

Ultimate **MK3**

Midway Manufacturing game creators Ed Boon and John Tobias have delivered their promised arcade update for *Mortal Kombat 3*. It's called *Ultimate MK3* (reviewed **NG 12**) and it began appearing in select arcades in early November.

That's a bit later than first anticipated, but the update was definitely worth waiting for because the update is much richer in new characters and gameplay than was originally promised.

As a matter of fact, Boon, Tobias & Co. came up with so much "good stuff" for the update that it required not just one new update chip, but a full set of 12 new chips! *Ultimate MK3* brings back all of the most popular characters and their deadly moves, plus it offers six new characters: Scorpion, Reptile, Kitana, Jade, plus two controllable hidden characters.

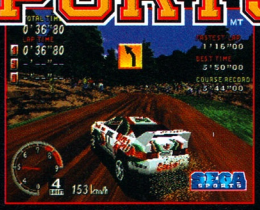
New backgrounds include hell, a river, a desert, and a cave, plus some hidden backgrounds. Some settings, the pit for example, have hidden fatalities. Three modes of gameplay are included: standard, two-on-two, and a tournament elimination-style where eight to 16 players can enter a single-elimination tournament on the spot.

A new "spiralling" ending is featured. According to Midway, "Players who finish a one-player game are greeted with a new ending which lets them choose from a number of new challenges including hidden characters. Even when the player thinks he has beaten the game, it gives him more challenges to overcome." There are also more combination moves per character, new codes for the "destiny matrix," and a new marquee.

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Generator

by **Mark James Ramshaw**



More digital developments revealed and explored in the industry column that's always hooked into the game development world

The Internet has credibility, it's official. The reason for this isn't because the likes of Microsoft have gone for it in a big way, and it's not because there are now modems installed in more homes than ever before. No, the reason the Internet carries real weight is because console manufacturers are going for a piece of the action. And you thought that 32-bit wonder machine just played videogames...

Of interest more for its efforts than the machine it's pushing, Philips is currently introducing CD-Online, initially just in the UK, for its CD-i machine — a system which manages to offer full Internet access without even the need for a keyboard. Using loadable CDs, it simplifies access and browsing, wrapping everything up in a user-friendly front-end which even goes so far as to remember different web threads for different family members. It's a little like America On-Line, but with the added opportunities for Philips' online shopping, and CD-i games which support modem multiplayer support. It has essentially removed the need for people to maintain any technical knowledge whatsoever.

"It is very much Internet-lite," admits Andy Stout, a writer for Philips own *CD-i* magazine. "The main advantages are that it's cheap — probably working out at a third of the cost of a PC or Mac solution — and incredibly user-friendly. The downside though is using a browser that doesn't support Netscape, and coping with all the drawbacks of the machine's miniscule memory — you can only ever access 10 articles on Usenet at a time, it'll only support 80 bookmarks maximum and for all that trouble all your saved games, preferences, and high scores will have been written over in RAM."

"What we have here is Philips attempt to repackage the Net as family entertainment," added Stout. "It's got the full access right but with only about 40% of the functionality, which will probably be fine for people who don't know what they're missing. But the virtual keyboard is a complete nightmare to use and until that problem is addressed I doubt whether it will ever really be a success." And then there's the fact that Philips' machine isn't exactly the heavily favored front-runner in the console war.

And so it's Sega's plans for the introduction of a Saturn modem, initially in Japan, spring 1996, which will really set the cat amongst the pigeons. Using a similar CD-driven front end to Philips' effort, Sega doesn't promise full web access, but instead regularly issued CDs will contain links to new and different sites. But its system removes the need for any kind of virtual keyboard, and Sega is enthusiastic to play on the opportunities for multiplayer gaming, shopping, and transmission of the latest Saturn information to online users. In Japan the launch price has already been set, at a very competitive 15,000 yen ($150), and as Sega's Mark Maslowicz has said: "The internet is definitely the future — and we're going for it big time."

At the moment Sony seems intent to see that Playstation is perceived purely as a game machine. But Sega's move must certainly be food for thought for Nintendo and 3DO (see page 22). And it seems the PC and the Macintosh may finally have some competition in the race for that "little black box" tag.

Mark Ramshaw is a free-lance journalist for numerous videogame and music magazines, and has been involved in the game industry for more than 15 years. Email him at: markr@hoops.demon.co.uk

Datebook

December

Home & Family Computing Supershow, on December 8 to 10 at the Dallas Convention Center and December 15 to 17 at the Moscone Center in San Francisco. Open to the public, this show is designed to provide an easy way for families to learn about computer products emphasizing education and entertainment. Please call (713) 974-5252 for more information.

January

International Winter Consumer Electronics Show (Winter CES), will convene on January 5 to 8 at the Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas, Nevada. Not open to the public, Winter CES serves as a showcase dedicated solely to consumer electronic products. For more information call (703) 907-7624.

The **San Francisco MACWORLD Expo** will convene January 9 through 12 at the Moscone Center, SF and will be packed with conferences ranging from multimedia and entertainment to CD-ROMs, design, web development, connectivity and more. Open to the public. For more info call MacWorld Expo Info Hotline at 1 (800) 645-3976 (EXPO).

Internet World Canada '96 on January 9 to 12, 1996 at Toronto, Canada. This show is open to the public and is set up for individuals seeking to take full advantage of the commercial info infrastructure. Exhibitors will include software and game developers, network admins, info designers, webmasters, etc. Call 1 (800) 632-5537.

February

Web Seminars February 6 to 7, 1996 in Chicago, IL. This exhibition is open to the public and introduces use of Mosaic, doing business on the Internet, development of home pages, online gaming, firewalls, security, etc. For more information call 1 (800) 632-5537.

The eighth **Networks Expo Boston** lands in the Hynes Veterans Memorial Convention Center, Boston, MA, February 13 to 15 and will educate and present new software and hardware solutions for future Internet business, networking, and the generation of Web pages. Open to the public. Contact the Blenheim Group at (801) 655-8024 for more information.

March

Intermedia World convenes on March 5 to 7, 1996. This show is open to the public and is set up to address the needs of developers, technologists, educators, and pros from the computer, entertainment, information, and communications industries. Call 1 (203) 840-5834.

The **ACME** (**American Coin Machine Exhibition**), is the annual amusement and coin-op show sponsored by AAMA, held March 7 through 9, at the Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, Fla. For exhibitor, attendee, or accommodations information, please contact William T. Glasgow, Inc. at (708) 333-9292. This show is for the trade and press only and is not open to the public.

SHOW ORGANIZERS: If your show or expo isn't listed here, it's because you haven't told us about it. Please call (415) 696-1688, or FAX information to (415) 696-1678, or send details to DATEBOOK, **NEXT Generation**, 1350 Old Bayshore Highway, Suite 210, Burlingame, CA 94010. We print calendar events three to four months in advance, and can always be found here in the news pages.

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NG 1
talking An interview with Trip Hawkins (President & CEO of The 3DO Company) • **ng** hardware A comprehensive, in-depth look at all the next generation systems **ng** special: The Violence Tapes. Four of the world's most controversial game developers in one virtual room

NG 2
talking Shigeru Miyamoto (creator of *Mario, Donkey Kong, Zelda, Pilot Wings*) **ng** hardware Saturn: The complete story so far **ng** special: Gaming on the information superhighway (aka "Joyriding") **ng** special Revival of the Fittest. Just why is retrogaming so popular?

NG 3
talking Tom Kalinske (Sega US' president) **ng** hardware: Does PlayStation live up to the hype? **ng** special: What's wrong with the PC? (Part one). Can PC gaming survive? **ng** special: Making tracks (aka the noble art of game music) **ng** software *Virtua Fighter*: Saturn's fighting chance profiled

NG 4 talking Nolan Bushnell (the inventor of *Pong*, and founder of Atari) **ng** special: Atari: from boom to bust, and back again. The complete history of the oldest videogame company in the world **ng** special: An audience with Gumpei Yokoi, the inventor of Nintendo's Virtual Boy and GameBoy **ng** special: What's wrong with the PC? (Part two). Where is the PC game scene heading?

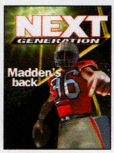
NG 5
talking Steve Race (Sony Computer Entertainment's former president) **ng** hardware Ultra 64: the story so far. Nintendo's 64-bit collaboration with Silicon Graphics is shrouded in secrecy. A 13-page exposé. **ng** special: Apple: The Ripe Stuff. The story behind Apple's new game machine, the Pippin

NG 6
talking Peter Molyneux (Bullfrog's leader and possibly the smartest guy in gaming) **ng** hardware M2: 3DO bites back. On paper, Trip Hawkins' M2 is "10 times more powerful than the PlayStation." But can 3DO make it work? **ng** special PlayStation's Disciples: A look at how PS-X games are made













NG 7
talking Sam Tramiel: Atari talks back (Atari's President & CEO) **ng** hardware 3DO: Past, Present, and Future. What has 3DO achieved so far, and what does the future hold for Trip Hawkins' vision? **ng** special Electronic Entertainment Exposition (E^3) — the definitive show report

NG 8
talking Howard Lincoln: Why the hell has Nintendo delayed Ultra 64? **ng** hardware Sega Saturn: What the TV commercials don't tell you...NG special Japanese RPGs: coming to a game machine near you **ng** software: Previews of PlayStation's two-player link-up

NG 9
talking So which 32-bit system is Electronic Arts betting on? An interview with EA's VP Bing Gordon **ng** special Reality Check: The Future of Virtual Reality — a full history, update, and thorough analysis of the state of VR **ng** hardware: Saturn: Sega's battle plan to attract developers

NG 10
talking Is this the end of FMV as we know it? An interview with Tom Zito, president, Digital Pictures **ng** special Do videogames screw you up? An in-depth look at the issues and solutions surrounding the strains of videogaming **ng** hardware: Motion Capture: a report on the newest wave of capturing

NG 11
talking Yu Suzuki, head of Sega's AM2 arcade division explains how he makes the best arcade games in the world **ng** special The Top 75 movers 'n' shakers in the gaming industry: who *really* wields the power? **ng** special: Mind Games: the rise and rise of artificial intelligence in computer games

NG 12
talking Chris Crawford — videogaming's self-proclaimed "Prophet in the Desert" explains the way games ought to be **ng** Head to head: each and every games machine rated and compared. The most exhaustive, comprehensive and controversial feature in **NEXT Generation**'s history

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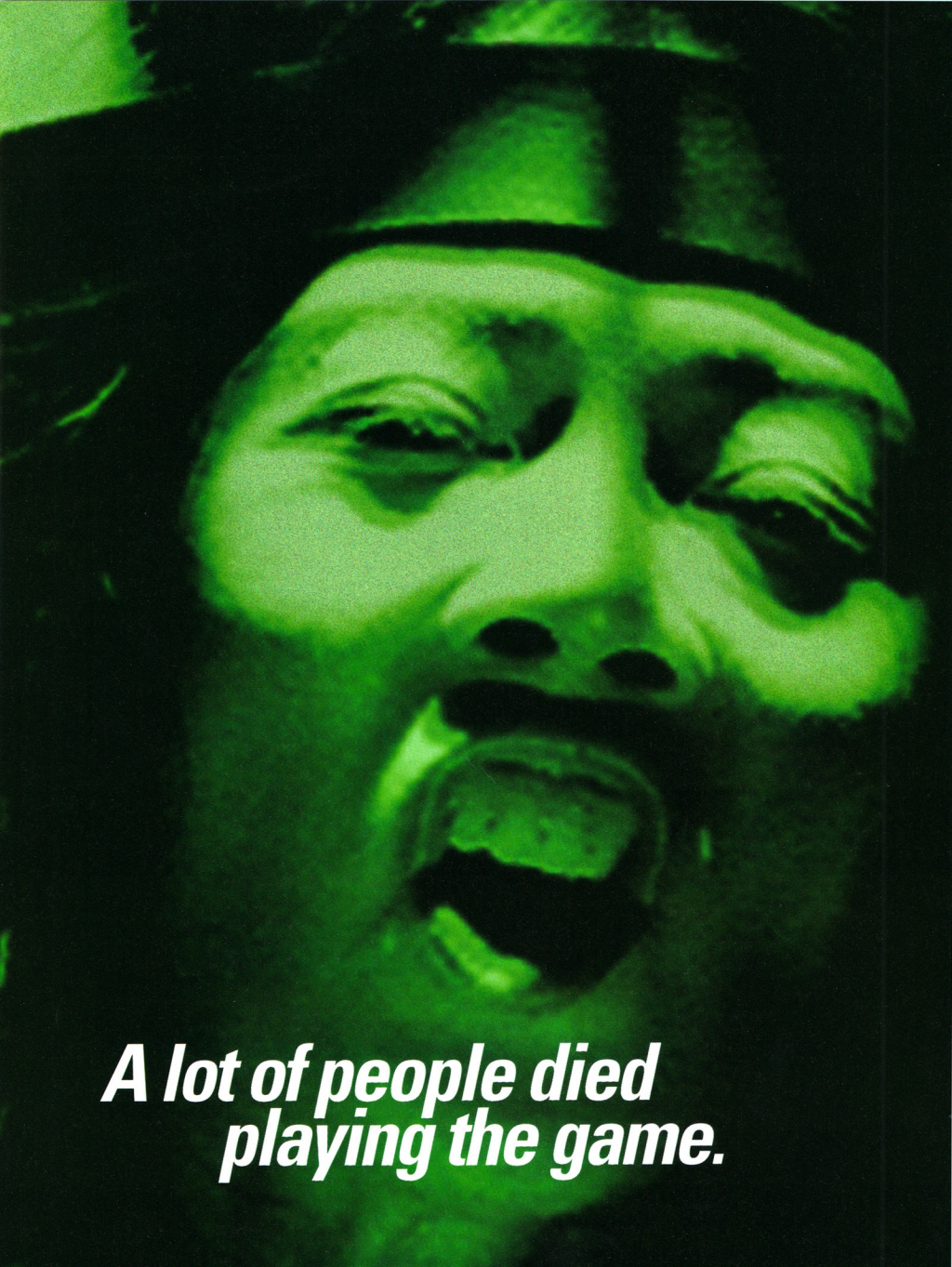
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1995: The calm



before the **storm**?

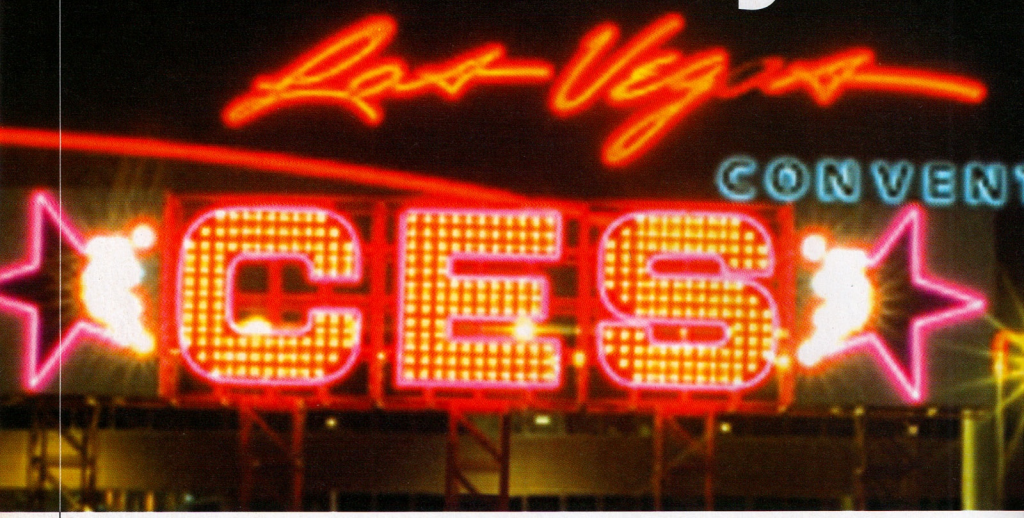
For most videogamers, 1995 was a year of anticipation. It was the year in which foundations were laid for the the real war to come. **NEXT Generation** looks back on the year that bore the 32-bit age



If the saying is true that a week is a long time in politics, then a year is a lifetime in the game industry. It's hard to imagine that just 12 months ago, there were no Saturns or PlayStations on US shores and that 32X was the hot new system on the block. Twelve months ago, Trip Hawkins remarked that "a lot of people don't believe Saturn will ever be marketed outside of Japan," while debate still raged within the industry as to whether Sony knew what the hell it was doing in the game business.

As any scholar of history knows, the best way to predict the future is to study the past. So with this in mind, **NEXT Generation** takes a look back at the events that shaped the year of 1995.

January



As the Christmas and New Year festivities fade, heads may be clearing but a cloud of claim, counter-claim, and complete bull still hangs over the next generation of interactive entertainment — making the industry's annual get-together at the Winter Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas an even bigger crap-shoot than usual (and, sadly, the emphasis ain't on shoot).

• **There's** no Sega Saturn, no Sony PlayStation, and no Nintendo Ultra 64. The revolution, it would seem, can wait.

• **Sega** spends the show desperately trying to convince the world that 32X is a priority. No one's convinced and a very lackluster software lineup does little to help its argument. Thankfully there's a little more going on behind closed doors where some impressive new Saturn software is being demonstrated.

• **Atari**, with no spectacular new Jaguar carts out front, also keeps its hottest new product out of the public eye, showing its cart/CD playing all-in-one Jaguar by invitation only.

• **Nintendo's** doors aren't just closed, they're locked and bolted. The firm's only comment on the next generation is that Ultra 64 is "coming on like a freight train, absolutely on schedule for a '95 launch." That's all right then. Meanwhile the firm tries hard to breathe more life into the Super NES, but titles such as *FX Fighter* and *Commanche* don't bring anything new to 16-bit in the way that *Donkey Kong Country* did in 1994. Nintendo does, however, show some new hardware, the 3D, desk-top, what-the-hell VR unit, Virtual Boy. The trade is baffled. Not impressed, just baffled. Apparently Nintendo hopes to sell three million hardware units at a retail price of around $200 in Japan during its first year after launch in April.

• **Away** from the show Acclaim buys Iguana (*NBA Jam*) while global rival EA buys European Development Team of the Year, Bullfrog (*Populous*, *Magic Carpet*, *Theme Park*) in a deal estimated to be worth about $45 million. The year 1995 proves to be the year of the developer, as all major publishers realize that content is king and attempt to tie up as much talent as possible in a series of acquisitions that make the industry a much more "corporate" place to be, and make some individuals very, very rich indeed.

• **Panasonic** unveils a new slimmer and more attractive 3DO model, the FZ-10.

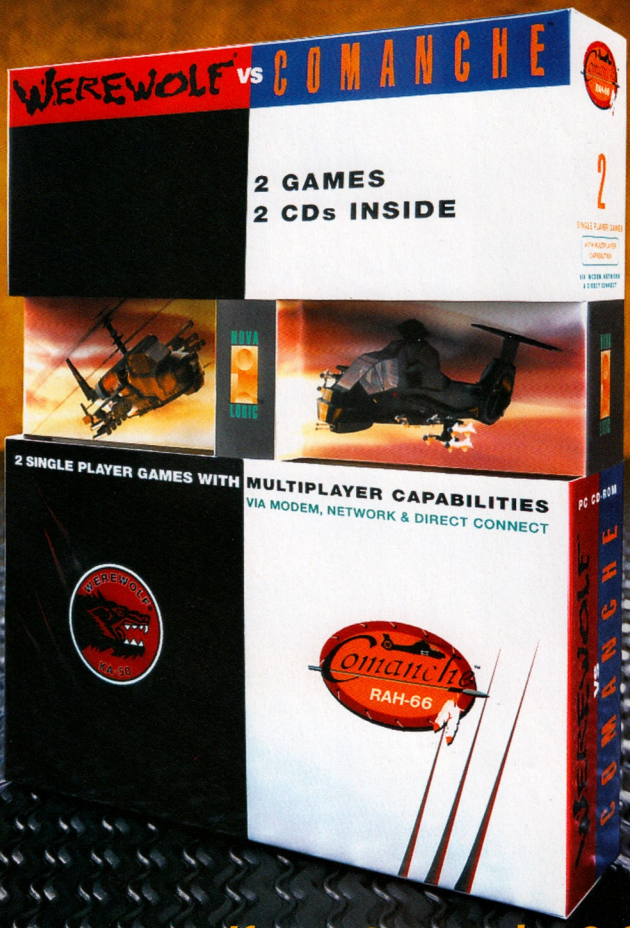
• **Meanwhile**, Sega shows it can still cut it as *Virtua Fighter 2* takes Japanese arcades by storm and a preview of *Sega Rally* is the star of the Nicograph trade show.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

"This industry is like a dysfunctional family, where everyone has been horribly abused."
Trip Hawkins, The 3DO Company

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February



Nintendo admits that the Ultra 64 won't reach Europe until '96 but it's still 100% on schedule for the US before Christmas. Honest.

• **The** phony war between Saturn and PlayStation continues to rage in the US with not only an absence of new product but also a lack of any detail on pricing, software, marketing support, or launch dates. In a repetition of their prelaunch battle in Japan, Sega and Sony seem particularly determined to keep as many of their plans hidden for as long as possible.

• ***Ridge Racer*** **and** ***Virtua Fighter*** — the first PlayStation and Saturn games to reach US shores in significant numbers — back up everyone's expectations. Both are fine games, emphasizing Sega's arcade pedigree and PlayStation's powerful, straightforward development environment.

• **The** only next generation options at US retail, however, remain 3DO and Atari's Jaguar, neither of which have particularly impressed the trade or caught the imagination of the public.

• **Bandai** becomes the first hardware licensee for Apple's Pippin, a leisure-oriented, game-playing mass-market Mac. The 64-bit unit, the Power Player, will incorporate a PowerPC 603 RISC processor with a quad-speed CD drive.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

"When I visit a town like New York, I like to walk alone at night, simply exploring the back streets and the hidden places. I explore on foot for a while then sometimes I buy a bicycle and cycle around town. Only when I know my way around will I buy a map."

Shigeru Miyamoto, Nintendo

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March



At last, some concrete news from a major player as Sega announces that Saturn will be launched on September 2 (henceforth known as "Saturnday") at about $350 to $450. Ironically, of course, this first morsel of fact turns out to be fiction.

• **Figures** from Japan indicate that Sega had the better of its Christmas scrap with Sony. Saturn sales to the end of the year are estimated at 500,000 while PlayStation totals are 300,000. The figures translate as 17,241 and 15,789 sales per day, respectively. Sega's first round victory comes despite general agreement among developers that PlayStation is a technically superior offering. The popularity of *Virtua Fighter*, however, is Sega's trump card.

• **At** the Amusement Trade Exhibition International in London, a six-player *Daytona USA* unit attracts huge crowds.

• **Still** in London, the European Computer Trade Show is dominated by Sony which takes half of the ground floor and packs its stands with demo units, but doesn't reveal pricing details. AM2's Saturn conversion of *Daytona USA* holds up Sega's end.

• **At** the ECTS awards ceremony EA is voted Publisher of the Year by an international panel of game reviewers.

• **The** British Government's Department of Trade and Industry issues a report on the videogame industry which concludes that Nintendo and Sega "conduct their affairs so as to prevent, restrict, or distort competition." However, despite the findings, the DTI remains powerless to change the situation.

• **As** the digital video format wars rage on Panasonic holds off on its 3DO MPEG add-on until the confusion clears.

• **Sony** signs PlayStation rights to Williams' *Mortal Kombat 3*, simultaneously securing a six-month lock-out on rival 32-bit and higher systems ensuring that the game won't hit Saturn until '96.

• **Atari** signs a deal with VR pioneers Virtuality to develop a head-mounted display for the Jaguar.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

"I don't know why, I've never overcome the sensation that [Nintendo] is about to pounce on us at any moment."

Tom Kalinske, Sega of America



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April



More concrete news from major players as Nintendo announces that the Ultra 64 will be launched in the US and Japan on November 21. Once again, the fact turns out to be fiction. A pattern is beginning to emerge.

• **After** missing its winter holiday deadline Atari's Jaguar CD drive is now scheduled to be launched in June at $149.

• **At** the Amusement Operators Union Show in Tokyo, Capcom grabs the spotlight with *Darkstalker's Revenge*, the follow-up to *Vampire Hunter*. Sega also impresses with the finished version of *Sega Rally* on show for the first time and a new, fast and furious soccer coin-op called *Virtua Striker*.

• **3DO** outlines the tech-specs for M2. It claims that the 64-bit technology based on a PowerPC 602 RISC chip running at 66 MHz will be "up to 10 times more powerful that Sony's PlayStation." It hopes that at least one hardware licensee will launch an M2 machine later in the year. Evidence of any real activity remains thin on the ground and there is a strong temptation to interpret the talk of a brave new tomorrow as a smoke screen for a pretty dismal today.

• **Nintendo** buys a 25% stake in Rare. The UK development team has been a prolific Nintendo supporter since the NES days and has produced about 90 titles for the manufacturer's sundry platforms. It is most renowned, however, for *Donkey Kong Country* on the Super NES, now officially the fastest selling videogame of all time with worldwide sales of well over 7.5 million. No financial details of the deal are revealed but Nintendo's investment guarantees Rare's exclusive support of all its formats from the NES to Ultra 64 and even Virtual Boy. Baffling.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

"As sure as I'm sitting here, there is a startup in a garage somewhere that will be significantly more successful than anything out there. I have no idea whom it is right now, but it's out there."

Nolan Bushnell, founder of Atari

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May

The phony war ends and the real battle begins as Sega pulls off the shock of the year, launching Saturn in the US on May 11, four months ahead of schedule. Its arrival in 1,800 stores throughout the US and Canada is the talk of Electronic Entertainment Expo, the first US trade show dedicated to interactive entertainment which takes place in Los Angeles, CA. Initially Sega appears to have surprised its rival. Saturn retails at $449 with *Virtua Fighter* or for $399 as a standalone. Only five other titles are available at launch: *Daytona USA*, *Clockwork Knight*, *Worldwide Soccer*, *Panzer Dragoon*, and *Pebble Beach Gold Links*.

• **32X?** Forget it. Sega is suddenly in full Saturn mode and gung-ho with what it's sure is a serious opening in the war proper.

• **Sony** confirms that is will launch PlayStation on September 9 at $299 with no bundled game — a *Ridge Racer* pack-in had been considered a shoe-in but now Sony sees price as a key. On the floor of E³ *Tekken* and *Destruction Derby* stand out.

• **Atari**, desperate to stay in the game and be seen as a big player, cuts the price of the Jaguar to $149 and shows an "early working demo model" of the VR unit developed in conjunction with Virtuality. Cynicism about the firm's ability to deliver a decent product at $300 isn't helped when the demo unit is exposed as Virtuality's own well-established arcade system covered in Jaguar casing.

• **Nintendo** scraps plans to launch the Ultra 64 in the US and puts forward April '96 as its new target although it remains unclear whether or not the firm is looking to hit Japan this year. At E³ the firm does show the cosmetics of the unit for the first time while explaining that the delay is in order to give developers more time to get to grips with the technology and to come up with a fuller and richer day-one support package. "We don't want to do a Sega," is what the sub-text reads.

• **Meanwhile**, the firm plugs away with the Virtual Boy (the industry remains baffled) and announces that *Killer Instinct* from Rare (previously thought to be heading straight to Ultra 64) will hit the Super NES for the 1996 holiday season.

• **3DO** President Trip Hawkins presents M2 to the industry and press at a New York conference, but the project remains vague.

• **Interplay** buys Shiny Entertainment, the development team set up by *Aladdin* creator Dave Perry, and which scored a hit with its first release, *Earthworm Jim*.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH:
"This is not a blue blood industry, and I don't think you need to have this long lineage of game history or game viability. This is a business that comes and goes."
Steve Race,
Sony Computer Entertainment of America

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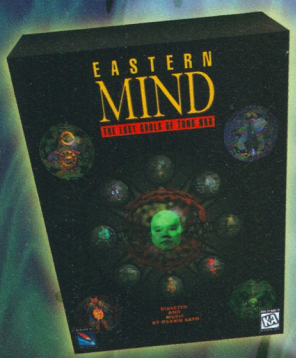


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June

After the excitement of E³ the focus moves back to Japan where the Sony-vs.-Sega battle is more intense than ever. First Sony announces plans for a "new" PlayStation. It's actually the original unit minus S-video output but it will sell at ¥29,800, 25% less than the "old" offering. At the same time the firm announces that sales in Japan have hit 1 million. Sega hits back immediately, dropping the price of the Saturn by 20% to ¥34,800 and claiming that its installed base is already up to 1.3 million. It certainly seems as if Saturn is slightly ahead but the momentum could be switching to Sony and its more consistent software support.

• Back to the US, Goldstar and Panasonic cut the price of their 3DO units to $299.

• **Nintendo** announces an August 14 launch date for Virtual Boy. It will be priced at $179.95 with *Mario's Dream Tennis* bundled and 11 other titles available. The entire industry remains steadfastly baffled.

• **Leading**-edge technology firm Lockheed Martin announces a PC-based 3D graphics accelerator, Real 3D, even more powerful than even the biggest arcade boards.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

"We can now use [the Super NES and Genesis] as the doorstops they should have been years ago. I've always disliked them. As a designer I've despised them. Thank God they're going!"

Peter Molyneux, Bullfrog Productions

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July



3DO claims that the price drops on both Goldstar's and Panasonic's machines have had a major impact and that its hardware is now outselling Saturn by as much as four:one. Sega dismisses the boast. Strangely, in the midst of the rivalry a rumor of possible collaboration between the two firms gathers strength. Sega is reportedly interested in licensing 3DO's M2 technology for use in its future next generation console. Sega denies the story, 3DO chooses not to comment.

• **Saturn** *Virtual Fighter 2* is shown at the Omacha Tokyo Toy Show and looks stunning.

• **At** the same show, Bandai unveils a redesigned, sleeker, more attractive Pippin-based Power Player which looks like a Mac console but lacks software support.

• **Microsoft** signs up nine Japanese firms to a new division called Gamebank dedicated to Windows 95. Luminaries such as Namco, Capcom, Taito, SNK, and Takara will pass on the rights to their arcade and console titles to Gamebank which will then develop and market Win 95-specific versions of their games.

• **Virtual** Boy launches in Japan and meets with a muted reception. Bafflement, even.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

"If Sony comes in at $299 or $249 then we'll do whatever we can to have the US International Trade Commission go after them. That's what's called dumping. And it's against the law."

Sam Tramiel, Atari

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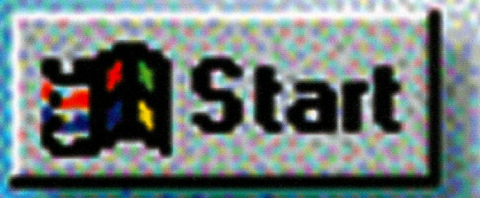


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SEGA SATURN SEGA EXCLUSIVE



August

Ultra 64 development systems finally reach Nintendo's "Dream Team" but the news of progress is marred by rumors of a rift among the third parties caused by only Acclaim, Virgin, and Williams being granted full publisher status.

• **There's** also trouble at Sony Computer Entertainment America as President Steve Race quits. No one is quick to come forward to explain — and no one denies the rumor that his departure is the result of bitter in-fighting between different Sony divisions over PlayStation pricing policy.

• **The** Viacom group announces plans to sell its media group Spelling but reveals it will be retaining Virgin Interactive Entertainment, highlighting the firm's importance within Viacom's overall strategy.

• **Microsoft** launches Windows 95 complete with multimillion dollar marketing campaign. There's carping about just how much of a step forward the new system really is but one million units are shifted around the world in just four days and the 50 million-plus sales target in the first year looks like being reached.

• **The** battle for arcade supremacy between Sega and Namco goes on as Sega unveils *Indy 500* and Namco previews *Rave Racer* — the follow-up to *Ridge Racer 2*.

• **Meanwhile** Sega announces details of its first ever move away from its own platforms. Saturn games will be released on the PC to run in conjunction with NVidia's Diamond 3D accelerator card.

• **Yet** another digital video option emerges as Toshiba and Time Warner join forces to promote the Super-Density Digital Video Disc (SDDVD), a format capable of storing 142 minutes of video (or more than 280 on a double-sided disc) with a rewriteable version available.

• **Virtual** Boy is launched at $179.95. "Baffled" seems to sum up consumer reaction rather nicely.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

"I think it would have been a mistake to rush [Ultra 64] to market. In this business you only get one cut at it, and I think gameplayers are very conscious of the quality of the software."

Howard Lincoln, Nintendo



(figure 1)

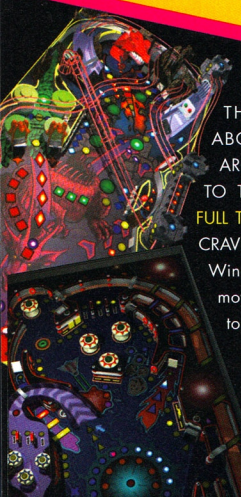
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(figure 2)

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September



Just a few weeks before the PlayStation hits the shops, Sega gives the Saturn an extra boost by bundling two extra titles — *Clockwork Knight* and *Worldwide Soccer* — plus a voucher redeemable against a copy of *Virtua Fighter Remix*. Sony says it's running scared. Sega responds, saying, "so try and catch up..." — and claims 100,000 US sales.

• **By** the end of the month, Sony boasts that it hasn't just caught up — it's taken the lead. It claims opening weekend sales of 100,000 and, in a statement that disputes Sega's figures, says this gives it a dominant market share. The latest and probably the greatest format war ever is well and now truly underway.

• **Back** on 16-bit *Yoshi's Island*, the latest game from *Mario* creator Shigeru Miyamoto, is launched in Japan and sells 1 million units more or less immediately.

• **Hasbro** ditches its plans for a home VR unit despite having already invested $59 million in the project. It explains that the chip costs were too high for the finished product to hit a mass-market price point.

• **The** second ECTS of the year takes place in London. The PlayStation version of Id's *Doom* looks very hot while *Sega Rally* impresses on Saturn.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

"It's hard to argue that in Japan Nintendo won't be one of the leaders no matter what they do. It's hard to argue that Sega won't be one of the leaders in the US and Europe. It's hard to imagine that Intel and Microsoft won't be a leader in the US."
Bing Gordon, Electronic Arts

ng special 1995

Following Acclaim's purchase of Iguana earlier in the year the previously marketing-led company underlines its commitment to development with the purchase of Europe's Probe Software and US team Sculptured. Probe is the biggest independent development resource in the world and Acclaim is rumored to have fought off a strong challenge from EA for the firm. Sculptured produced many of the versions of *Mortal Kombat 1* and 2.

• **Nintendo** cuts the price of the (wait for it) baffling-as-ever Virtual Boy from $179.95 to $159.95. Bargain? Hmm…

• **Sega** of America's President Tom Kalinske hits back at reports of Sony running away with the US market. He claims the firm exaggerated its opening weekend sales (ie lied), that Saturn sales have gone well past 120,000 while PlayStation may be hitting that figure around now.

• **Sega** cans the Neptune, realizing the price of the machine would be too close to Saturn to tempt many and is also wary of diluting its Saturn marketing message.

• **3DO** gives up the hardware battle, selling the rights for its M2 technology onto Matsushita (the parent firm of Panasonic) in a deal worth more than $100 million. An M2 machine will emerge next year backed by the largest electronics manufacturer in the world (yes, bigger than Sony) as 3DO concentrates on software.

• **Atari**'s deal with Virtuality to produce a Jaguar VR collapses. No firm explanation is offered but Virtuality denies there is a problem with the product and begins pitching the unit to other manufacturers.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH:
"I, personally, could never really care enough about the Princess Zelda to spend the 40 hours I needed to spend battling through the forest in order to rescue her."
Tom Zito, Digital Pictures



October

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November



Sega's Tom Kalinske denies that PlayStation is outselling Saturn. "We're about even," is his most generous assessment of Sony's performance. His belief as to Saturn's initial performance is contrary to seemingly everyone else in the entire game business.

• **Rumors** start circulating that Atari has laid off the majority of its Jaguar development staff. This has to be seen as a waving of the white flag in the hardware war, and the end of Jaguar. Evidently, Atari plans to divert its attention to the development and publishing of PC games.

• **Nintendo** unveils Ultra 64 for the first time at the Shoshinkai show in Tokyo, Japan. (Full report next month)

• **32X** fails to appear in a Toys R Us Christmas stock directory. If this doesn't signal the machine's demise, nothing will.

• **NEXT Generation** celebrates its first birthday! Thanks to all our readers for their support. Here's to 1996...

QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

"No competitor strikes me as a particular threat, but in the domestic consumer market, Sony is doing very well, considering that this is the company's first time entering the game business."

Yu Suzuki, Sega Japan

Sony PlayStation
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Saturn Development
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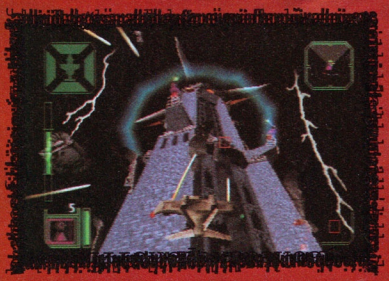


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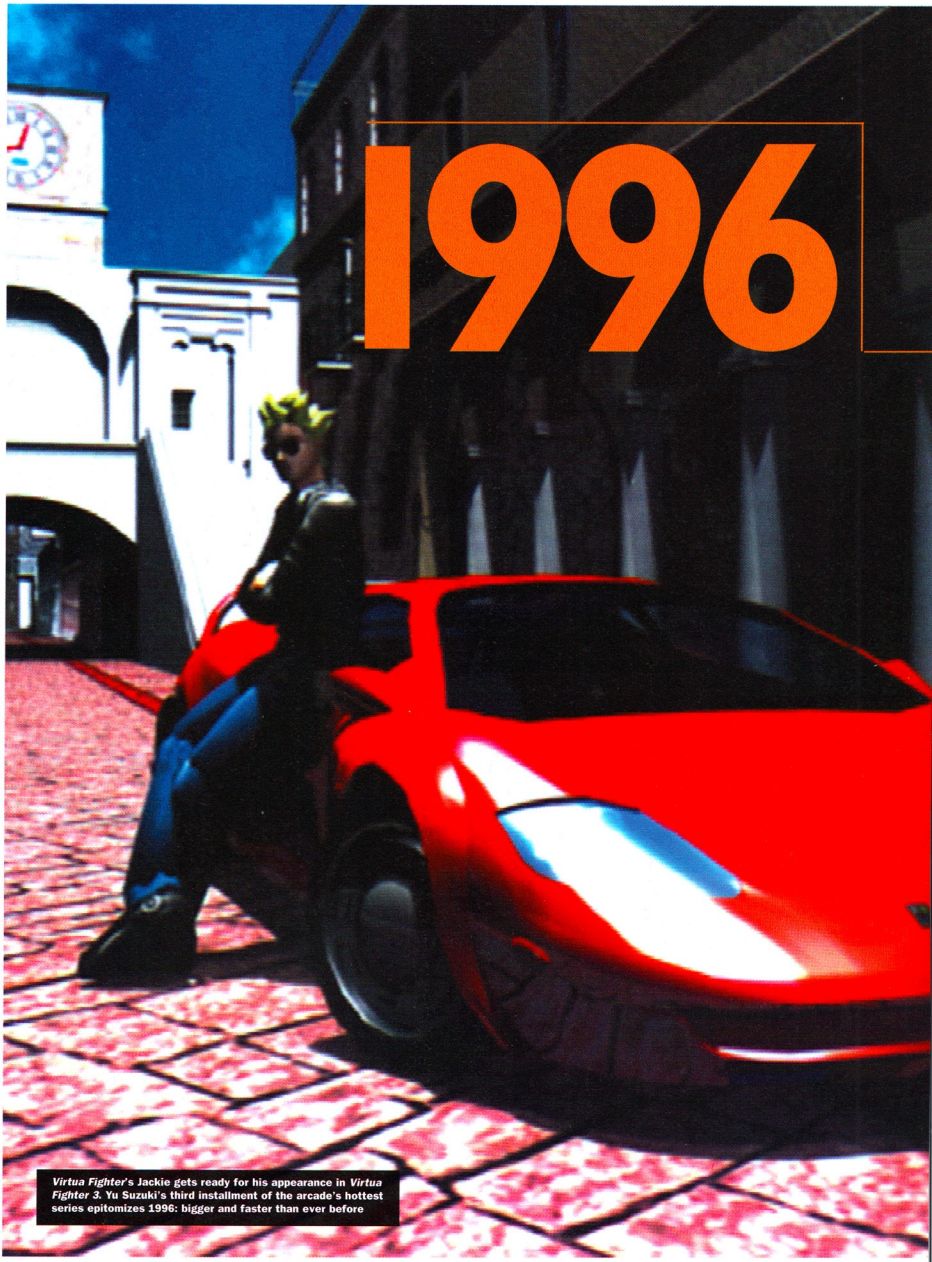
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SONY PlayStation

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1996



Virtua Fighter's Jackie gets ready for his appearance in *Virtua Fighter 3*. Yu Suzuki's third installment of the arcade's hottest series epitomizes 1996: bigger and faster than ever before



The Year of the Videogame

So what will happen in 1996? After consulting the game industry's brightest minds, **NEXT Generation** takes a look at the challenges facing each company over the year ahead

As 1995 gives way to 1996, the videogame world dominated by the 16-bit Genesis and Super NES finally yields to the brave new generation of 32-bit and 64-bit superconsoles. Already, the headlines are dominated by Sega's Saturn and Sony's PlayStation, but up until the end of 1995's holiday shopping period, the lion's share of the game industry's revenues and profits have been from 16-bit and PC titles. All this will change in 1996.

Over the following pages, **NEXT Generation** analyzes the state of each major company that will compete in the inevitable hardware wars to be fought over the next 12 months. All are gunning for market dominance, all have millions of dollars at stake, and all will fight to crush the opposition. You thought the battle between Sega and Sony was tough in the months up until Christmas? You ain't seen nothing yet.

But there are questions that remain to be answered that affect the industry as a whole. Clouds of uncertainty exist in four key areas which may lead to the unthinkable — the hypothetical situation of no hardware platform achieving anywhere near the level of success that is predicted, and the "next generation" of videogaming being merely a small, passing flash in the pan.

1) No one has proved that a game machine costing more than $200 can be successful. The 16-bit giants didn't start selling in really big numbers until prices dipped below $150, and there is little evidence to suggest that neither Sony, Sega, nor Nintendo will be able to manufacture their 32-bit and 64-bit consoles cheap enough to facilitate this price. There was anything up to 1 million 32-bit game systems sold in the US in 1995. Sound like a lot? Not when you consider that at their peak, Nintendo and Sega had between them sold 32 million, sub-$150, 16-bit systems to US homes.

2) The PC business continues to boom. The honeymoon period of PC-users embracement and infatuation with multimedia shows no sign of waning, while Internet-access continues to give PCs and Macs an advantage over dedicated game machines. Although PCs can't play games any better than consoles can, and they remain almost 10 times the price, these two killers apps may cement the PC's lead over the dedicated game machines.

3) Meanwhile, Digital Video Disc [DVD] is the future. And that means DVD players installed in every home. Matsushita believes that it can start bringing DVD players to US stores within the year — and it is anticipated that these machines (and similar units from competitors) will include computer hardware that will also enable games to be played. The "next generation" of pure game machines may in fact be superseded before they truly arrive.

4) Commitment. Nintendo's got it. Sega's probably got it. Atari definitely had it. Sony may have it. If sales don't reach expectations (and with companies taking up to a $100 loss on every piece of hardware sold), how committed are the major players to making this generation of game machines a hit?

But enough pessimism. Actually, make that enough healthy open-mindedness. In all probability, it's true to say that gamers have never had it so good. Let's see what challenges each individual company will face over the year ahead.

66 Sega Saturn

Searching for *Sonic*
While Sega Japan's arcade hits keep Saturn alive, Sega of America is searching for its 32-bit *Sonic*

68 Sony PlayStation

Keeping up momentum
PlayStation leads the 32-bit race in momentum, but can the newcomers keep up the pace in 1996?

71 Nintendo Ultra 64

Here comes the heavyweight
For Sony and Sega, 1995 was like a nice game of *Sim City* with disasters "turned off." Enter Godzilla...

73 The PC

The shrinking technology gap
As PlayStation and Saturn developers find their feet, the PC's technological advantage is shrinking

75 3DO

The rudderless ship?
As The 3DO Company sells M2 and its hardware aspirations to Matsushita, what happens next?

75 Atari Jaguar

Fear of extinction
As **NEXT Generation** goes to press, rumors continue to circulate that Atari's Jaguar is dead

77 Matsushita M2

Bigger than Sony...
Matsushita may not be the most recognizable name in gaming, but this newcomer is easily the biggest

Sega Saturn

Always the underdog, Saturn has nevertheless recently shown some sharp teeth in the form of *Virtua Fighter 2* and *Sega Rally*





***Virtua Fighter 2* is Sega's ticket to success in 1996. It finally shows what the machine is capable of, encouraging third party support**

Sega Saturn has to be considered a major player in 1996, despite coming into severe criticism from game reviewers, software developers, and industry analysts in 1995. Indeed, at the launch of PlayStation it was difficult to find anyone with a kind word to say for Sega's 32-bit machine (except, of course, the perennial bleating of various Internet sites). The problem was that developers were having a very tough time getting the machine to live up the claims of its manufacturers. Then, as the initial batches of PlayStations started to flood off store shelves (approximately 100,000 in the first weekend), it seemed (when compared to the trickle of Saturn's sold since its launch on May 11 — approximately 60,000 up until PlayStation's debut), that it simply wouldn't be worth devoting the development time and resources to try and master a machine that might not be around that long.

Two things changed this state of affairs in November of 1995. The first was *Virtua Fighter 2*. The second was *Sega Rally*. But despite the awesome polygon-crunching power and sheer gameplay value demonstrated by these two titles, Sega will have several problems to overcome before it can fight competitively in 1996.

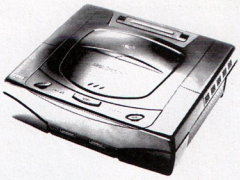
First, it's estimated by industry analysts such as DataQuest and Jeffries & Co. that it costs Sega approximately $330 to manufacture each Saturn. By the time these units have been boxed, marketed, shipped, and distributed, it is estimated that Sega is losing almost $100 per unit. If Sega hopes to sell one million units (which indeed it does), then it has to be prepared to lose $100 million before it starts making money back on the software. That's a big hole in the bank balance. Sega's current business model and calculations may account for this, but it is unlikely — given the loss it is already suffering — that Sega would be able to match a price drop by PlayStation to $249, or keep pace with Nintendo's proposed launch of Ultra 64 at "below $250." Saturn may once again find itself overpriced, with no aces left in the hole to play.

You can bet that throughout 1996, Sega's technical teams will be working on ways to manufacture Saturns more cheaply — and negotiating with its various chip providers for better deals as manufacturing quantity increases.

Second, while *Sega Rally* and *VF2* may match anything that PlayStation is capable of, they are the results of the very best development teams in the world having spent almost two years mastering the hardware (with unlimited access to the people who designed it), working from tried and trusted arcade

Sega may find that it would be more profitable to abandon the hardware market early in the 32-bit war, and instead ride the coattails of an alternative hardware producer's success

game formulas. A far cry from newcomer Takara's six-month, start-from-scratch rush job of *Battle Arena Toshinden* for PlayStation — and the kind of resources that only a precious few third party game developers can hope to match. However, if Sega can share the wealth of AM2 and AM3's talent faster than disappointing sales put more and more people off developing for the system, then it may find that eclipsing PlayStation's best efforts becomes a regular occurrence, and not just once in a blue moon. You can bet that throughout 1996, Sega evangelists will hit the road in an effort to encourage continued game development.



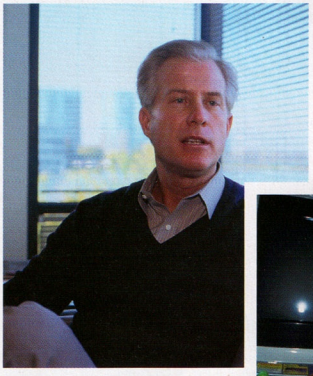
(It also has to be noted that when *Sega Rally* and *Virtua Cop* reach the Saturn, Sega has used up all its stock of hit arcade titles. From this point on, it will have to rely on the steady trickle of Saturn conversions of new coin-ops as and when they appear.)

Third, if Sega gets a chance to take a look up from the war its in and cast an entrepreneurial eye at the bigger picture (and you can guarantee that someone is paid to do exactly this at Sega HQ), then it may find that it would be more profitable for Sega to abandon the hardware market early in the 32-bit war, and instead ride the coattails of an alternative hardware producer's success. Sega of America's President Tom Kalinske practically admits this himself in this month's interview (page 6). Given that Sega itself acknowledges that it is a software creating and marketing company before it is a hardware producing company, it was put to Kalinske that if Sega were an independent software publisher, such as Electronic Arts, and owners of such hot arcade titles as *Virtua Fighter 1* and *2*, *Sega Rally*, *Daytona USA*, and *Virtua Cop*, it would be making a lot more money now — publishing its games on each and every system — than its current situation of deliberately restricting the audience for its games, and paying $100 per unit for the privilege. Tom's reply? "We would make a lot more money, right." He goes on to say: "hypothetically, if someone could make a [game system] and get it into all the homes in this country or into the vast majority of them, would we just want to be a software developer? You bet." Well that " system" may turn out to be Ultra 64 or PlayStation, and it may happen in 1996.

Fourth, Sega has to fight momentum. While it may indeed be too early to name the winners and losers of the hardware battle (at least among the big boys), the development community has to pick its winners and losers 18 months ahead. State-of-the-art 32-bit games take a year and a half to develop, and often cost in excess of $1 million: it's no surprise publishers are reluctant to take the risk of the host machine not being around when the game reaches fruition. And, given the state of the market up until Christmas '95, any company making its development decisions now has to consider PlayStation and PC development a necessity, Ultra 64 a possibility, and Saturn development a luxury (especially when considering the ease of developing for each system).

In conclusion, second only to Nintendo, Sega knows more about the industry than anyone else — and Saturn is a very strong system. However, its daunting complexity may put off prospective game developers already scared by its lackluster sales — especially if Nintendo triggers an across-the-board price-drop of all systems to $249 that Saturn is unable to match. Expect Sega to fight hard throughout 1996. ng

If Sega can share the wealth of AM2 and AM3's talent, it may find that eclipsing PlayStation's best efforts becomes a regular occurrence, and not just once in a blue moon





Sega of America's President Tom Kalinske (above) remains confident in Saturn's success. As long as Yu Suzuki (right) can keep producing arcade classics like *Virtua Fighter 2*, Kalinske may well be right

What to look for in 96

• More great arcade conversions from Yu Suzuki's AM2 and AM3 Japanese studios • Continued interest in extra-curricular game publishing by Sega on PC and Neo-Geo formats • Continued search for "Saturn's *Sonic*" by Sega of America • Hesitant third party support • Sales secondary to that of PlayStation, but ahead of 3DO • Pricing difficulties come launch of Ultra 64 • An outside chance of Sega abandoning the hardware battle and instead scoring big as an independent software publisher

PlayStation

Sony's arrival on the game scene was a big success. But can the videogame industry's new kids on the block keep up the pace?

Of course, Sony Computer Entertainment is riding high right now. The September 9 launch of PlayStation was seemingly an overwhelming success, despite problems of early machines overheating and incompatibilities with certain models of Zenith TVs. Indeed, whereas Sega was scrambling to get titles out in time for the holiday sales period, Sony was in the enviable position of actually being able to hold some sure-fire blockbusters back (such as *Wipeout* and *Tekken*) for the sake of balance.

But Sony has been lucky. Who would have expected 12 months ago that titles such as *Wipeout*, *WarHawk*, and *NFL GameDay* would have come from Sony's in-house development team? Previously, Sony had been ridiculed by gamers the world over as purveyors of some of the worst quality software ever to hide behind an expensive license and fancy packaging. Now it seems that Sony has its own powerhouse of talent which is able to keep PlayStation supplied with quality software, and Sony Corp. supplied with a healthy profit flow.

Well, maybe not yet. Software development empires are not built in a day, and it remains to be seen if Sony can keep up the pace set by its early batch of releases. After initial promise, will Sony-badged gaming return to the bad old days of *Dracula*, *Last Action Hero*, and *CliffHanger*? Let's hope not. Either way, it's a little early to start comparing Sony's team to Sega's Yu Suzuki & Co. This is Sony's biggest challenge for 1996. Especially when considering it's from Sony's own software that Sony Corp. (who, like Sega, loses money on each hardware unit sold) hopes to make the majority of its profits.





***Wipeout* is arguably the best original 32-bit game yet. But who would ever have thought it would come from Sony?**

Another problem facing PlayStation is quality of output from its third parties. While Sony may reasonably have held games back prior to the holiday of 1995 (there simply weren't enough hardware units out for everyone to make any money if too many games were released) it will have a hard time exercising the same control in 1996. Sony spent a lot of time and effort encouraging developers to make PlayStation games, and right about now, this investment is coming home to roost. Along with every company who produces an innovative, thoroughly play-tested classic, you can bet that there will be a handful of organizations eager to release rushed, derivative cash-ins. Sony has yet to demonstrate how it will deal with these.

However, this problem is merely a symptom of a healthy and thriving third party community eager to work with PlayStation. Quality titles have come thick and fast — from a wide variety of sources: *Destruction Derby* (Reflections), *Jumping Flash!* (Sony Japan), *Battle Arena Toshinden* (Takara), *Loaded* (Gremlin) — four classic titles, from surprise companies. And despite what Sega may have you believe, just because Sony makes it easy for games to be developed for PlayStation it doesn't mean that games won't continue to improve. They will. It is widely predicted that 1996 will see continued support from the development community, who are

happy with both PlayStation's sales so far and the ability to easily convert PlayStation games to PC format, and vice versa. Certainly, seemingly all software company's have announced a "healthy commitment" to continued PlayStation development, while many others are putting Saturn and 3DO on hold (Jaguar was dead in the eyes of most software producers more than a year ago) and — as Electronic Arts explained — simply publishing on Saturn, 3DO, and Mac formats "opportunistically" (ie, when there is a no-brainer conversion to be done).

All this may change come the launch of Ultra 64. The computer and game industries have typically settled down into situations of duopoly — with two main systems and formats carving up the marketplace. Within their own individual markets and time periods, battles between PC and Mac, Super NES and Genesis, GameBoy and Game Gear, Nintendo's NES and Sega's Master System, Sinclair's Spectrum and Commodore's C64, and Atari's ST and Commodore's Amiga, have become classic chapters of computing and gaming's history. And students of history are the best prepared for the future — there's no real reason to assume that the industry won't once again seek to reduce the risky challenge of having to pick the right system to simply a two-horse race. Certainly, if Ultra 64 offers the quantum leap in performance that Nintendo promises, and if Nintendo is able to offer some cheap, realistic alternative to cartridges as a primary storage medium, and if Nintendo shows itself to be friendly and accommodating in its business practices, then Ultra 64 could easily overshadow PlayStation as the development community's system of choice alongside the PC. Anyone who says that the PC scene will be usurped is a fool.



Last, Sony faces the challenge of its own commitment. This is perhaps PlayStation's toughest challenge for 1996 — finding the stomach and allocating the resources to stay committed to what it's started with the possibility of revenues below expectations, and the threat (magnitude currently unknown) of Ultra 64. Additionally, Sony is always eager to point to its multifarious divisions and sister companies and claim that "synergy" (the manipulation of its diverse resources to achieve success greater than the sum of its parts) helps drive its businesses forward. So far, however, the only tangible results of this "synergy" have been to coerce Michael Jackson (a Sony act) into showing up for five minutes at the PlayStation party at E³, and having special PlayStation promotions at a few Sony movie theaters. Hardly a world-crumbling display of power from a multibillion, multinational corporate machine. Additionally, the removal of ex-Sony Computer Entertainment of America President Steve Race (and the subsequent removal of his superior Olaf Olafsson) merely back up complaints from within PlayStation HQ that Sony Corp. has been nothing but a weight around SCE's neck.





In the form of *Tekken* (above) and *Ridge Racer* (right), Namco gave Sony two big weapons with which to battle Sega. However, with the arrival of *Sega Rally* and *VF2*, Sony will have to find its second-generation killer apps

It ain't all singing and dancing at Sony, y'know. And let's not forget that Sony is one of the major corporations pushing DVD. Sooner or later, those sitting at the top of the Sony tree may decide that pushing two independent formats of set-top boxes isn't such a smart idea.

In conclusion, the prognosis for PlayStation in 1996 is bright. But Sony needs to continue concentrating on quality software (both its own and its third parties), be prepared for a price cut forced by Nintendo (PlayStation costs approximately $280 to manufacture) and keep people believing that Sony is a good organization to do business with.

ng

Previously, Sony had been ridiculed by gamers the world over as purveyors of some of the worst quality software to ever hide behind an expensive license and fancy packaging

What to look for in 96

• Continued strong third party software support • A competitive price drop to match Ultra 64's "below $250" tag if and when it happens • Strong sales throughout 1996 • Possible lapses in quality of software as third parties demand that their games are published • Possible eclipsing by Ultra 64 as the premiere system of choice in the US



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Ultra 64

As Ultra 64 prepares to launch, the world awaits Nintendo's entry into the next generation videogame race

As **NEXT Generation** goes to press, Ultra 64 makes its November debut at the Shoshinkai show in Tokyo. Although at this point, the finer details of Ultra 64's launch plans and specifications remain in a cloud of mystery, what is certain is that the gaming world is awaiting the unveiling of Nintendo's new beast with bated breath.

Quite simply, Nintendo remains the single most important company in the game business. Whether or not the 64-bit processing muscle of Ultra 64 lives up to expectations, or whether it "does a Jaguar" is irrelevant in terms of the interest and impact its launch will initially make on the US market. Nintendo is believed to launch Nintendo 64 (as the machine will be known in its native country) in Japan on March 21. Supposedly, the only major hold-ups are software support and Nintendo's hesitation to unnecessarily cut short what it still sees as a lucrative 16-bit Super NES market. A US launch is rumored for later summer of 1996, or (less likely) simultaneously with the Japanese launch. Either way, Nintendo refused to deny to **NEXT Generation** that machines were boxed and "ready to go" in its Washington warehouse.



Nintendo faces only one major obstacle going into 1996 (assuming that Ultra 64 actually works OK). The first is the choice of storage medium for Ultra 64. For the longest time, Nintendo has stuck to its original promise that Ultra 64 "will not be a CD-ROM-based machine." And, in the absence of any realistic (or cheap) alternatives (rumors of a custom magnetic disk system or down-loadable games via the Internet remain unlikely and unfeasable, respectively) that has left good ol' fashioned cartridges as the most likely alternative.

Right now, the game industry's reactions to cartridges is similar to the reaction of a bull to a red cape: anger, suspicion, aggression — and the rememberance of far too many ridiculous charges in the past (groan). Yup, cartridge manufacturing cost anything up to $30 per unit at the height of the 16-bit age. Now, CDs cost less than a dollar to manufacture — and (not surprisingly) game publishers are reluctant to return to the days of when you had to bet the entire company every time you manufactured enough cartridges to give yourself a chance of having a hit. Also, game developers have been to some extent spoiled by the freedom that the CD format grants — virtually unlimited intro sequences, CD soundtracks, and the ability to incorporate video footage at will, all will be missed by developers, if not gamers.

Of course, Nintendo may in fact embrace CD-ROM technology later on, or it may have some clever alternative concealed up its sleeve. But right now it's a problem. ng



The joypad that Nintendo refused to unveil until the very last minute, and the four-player Ultra 64 hardware itself. Nintendo remains the most powerful force in gaming. The world anxiously awaits its 64-bit launch

What to look for in 96

• The videogame world holds its breath as Nintendo launches (in its own time) Ultra 64 in Japan and then the US • Spectacular games from Nintendo's in-house teams (most notably, Mr. Shigeru Miyamoto) at launch • An ultra competitive launch price of $249, moving to $199 in time for the holiday season. • Trouble persuading the game community to publish games on cartridges • Ultra 64 not delivering the quantum leap in performance over and above PlayStation necessary to eclipse Sony's momentum after a successful US launch in 1995

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PC

As the PC continues to go from strength to strength, the continued expansion of the Internet and new graphics accelerators promise the most expensive gaming platform continued success

The PC scene continues to explode, with an estimated 30,000 new machines sold each week, worldwide. The three factors driving the PC's continued invasion into the homes of the US are the Internet, "multimedia" and — of course — games. Whether this trend continues throughout 1996 is open to debate: but a number of factors could affect the PC's continued status as gamers' platform of choice.

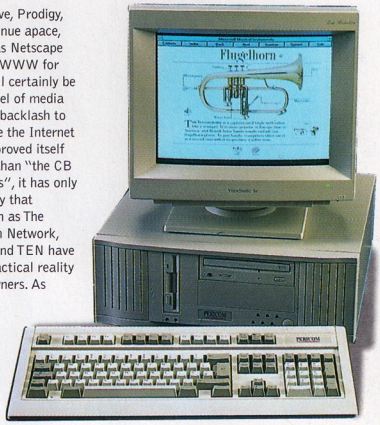


First is the problem that while over the last couple of years the PC has easily outclassed any game console in terms of performance, the new 32-bit consoles match an unassisted Pentium's performance — at just 10% of the price. People do buy $3,000 PC systems for the sole purpose of playing games (mostly **NEXT Generation** readers, in fact) but these people may now find that a $300 dedicated game console offers everything they need.

The second problem facing the PC's continued growth (and hence PC gaming along with it) is that sooner or later, "multimedia" is going to lose its trendiness. People are going to realize that sure, the majority of multimedia titles are "kinda neat," look good, and can almost convince you and your friends that spending $3,000 on a PC was worth it — but they sure as hell aren't the revolution in information and entertainment that the hype would suggest.

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And then what about the Internet? Whereas the growth of the major online services (AOL, Compuserve, Prodigy, Microsoft Network) continue apace, and web browsers (such as Netscape and Mosaic) open up the WWW for all, there will certainly be a similar level of media and fashion backlash to follow. While the Internet has indeed proved itself to be more than "the CB of the 1990s", it has only been recently that services such as The ImagiNation Network, DWANGO and TEN have made online gaming a practical reality for the majority of PC owners. As these and similar services mature and broaden throughout '96, it will make the PC the scene of the most significant revolution in gaming since Nolan Bushnell decided to make *Pong* with two controllers. Especially as ISDN connections become the mass-market standard, with speeds in excess of 10 times that of a 28.8-baud modem.



The PC offers a gradual and steady improvement in system power, as opposed to the stop-and-go leapfrogging of the dedicated systems' progress

One thing for sure in the PC market is that performance will continue to increase and game development will flourish. Quad-speed drives are destined to replace double-speeds, and, with support by Win 95, graphics and multimedia accelerator cards will become *de rigueur* add-ons for those not prepared to wait for the 200 MHz Pentiums expected to ship from Intel by year's end. ng

What to look for in 96

• Continued growth in sales, power and — inevitably — cost • Introduction of graphics cards and multimedia accelerators give games an additional shot in the arm (for those who can afford them) • Continued major support from third party game publishers • Online gaming takes off. Big time • Possible disillusionment with the Internet and multimedia leads to slump in sales • PC sales (for gaming purposes) may dip as PlayStation, Saturn, and Ultra 64 offer more bang per buck



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3DO

With M2 having been sold on to Matsushita, will 3DO remain committed to the MultiPlayer?



The 3DO Company, having sold the rights to produce an M2-based game machine to Matsushita (see page 18), finds itself — metaphorically speaking — all dressed up with nowhere to go. With the sale of M2 to Matsushita goes a lot of 3DO's incentive to make its current 32-bit MultiPlayer business a success: Why bother installing a base of 3DO-owners, all eager to spend more money down the line investing in M2, when you no longer own the M2 technology? Of course, 3DO denies that this is an influence and says that its own and third party development of games for the 32-bit 3DO system continue apace.

A look down third party release schedules and 3DO's refusal to guarantee that "there will be the same if not more level of development for 3DO in 12 months time," however, would indicate that the company is waving goodbye to its hardware aspirations and instead will move into other fields. PC publishing, continued technological research (3DO has maintained the right to continue developing M3 technology), and the marketing of M2-based technology as PC accelerators and coin-op components seem the most likely. ng

What to look for in 96

• An increase in The 3DO Company's game development activities (what Trip Hawkins perhaps always did best) for the PC and possibly other consoles • Continued development of M3 and other M2-based peripherals • A slow decline in the number of games released for the 3DO • Confusion within 3DO as "So what do we do now?" is slowly answered after the sale of M2

Jaguar

As rumors circulate that the next generation war has claimed its first major casualty, Atari turns to the PC for cash relief

As NEXT Generation 13 goes to press, rumors slipped from Atari's Sunnyvale-CA HQ indicating that the majority of its own Jaguar software development staff had allegedly been laid off. If true, this news comes from the company who's president, Sam Tramiel, said in the NG7 interview "We want to be the major publisher on our system. That's where we see ourselves making money to move Jaguar forward." As Tramiel went on to explain, "For hardware makers to succeed, they have got to be significant publishers on their own platforms. So our focus is to be our own biggest publisher." This would mean that if you find yourself cutting back drastically on your software development, you are simultaneously cutting back on your hardware business. So if true, this move could only mean that Atari was washing its hands of Jaguar, and seeking to explore more fertile pastures.



If indeed the last Jaguar unit has been manufactured, presumably Atari still has Jaguar hardware in stock and will continue to sell these asap. The '95 holiday sales period would then have been Atari's last chance to squeeze profit out of the Jaguar (having already confirmed the cancelation of Jaguar 2 and the Jaguar VR add-on). It is expected Atari will move forward with plans to devote its considerable experience and gaming expertise to developing and publishing games for the PC and emerging online markets. ng



Could this be the end of the Jaguar? A lot depends on how it performs this holiday season

What to look for in 96

• The channeling of Atari's resources into producing games for the PC and other consoles • The possible phasing out of Jaguar with no more systems manufactured. • Perhaps Jaguars will go on sale at rock-bottom prices, depending on how many units Atari has left to sell

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M2

Matsushita just spent $100 million on a game machine. Now the world waits to see what it will do with it...

Actually, Matsushita didn't buy a game machine — it bought a chipset that was designed to provide the heart of 3DO's 64-bit game machine. There's a big difference. While there is considerable skill and expertise involved in the process of designing state-of-the-art chips optimized for gameplaying (about $100 million worth, in Matsushita's expert opinion), equally important is the business planning, building of in-house game development talent, the establishing of relationships with independent third party game developers, choosing software mediums, packaging, marketing, (did we miss anything?), that are part and parcel of bringing a new game machine to market.



Is Matsushita up to this challenge? Well, probably — it is the largest consumer electronics company in the entire world (yes, bigger than Sony). But it's easy to underestimate the amount of work it will have to do if the Japanese mega-corp intends to bring a dedicated game machine to a market that (by the time it will reach fruition) will be already dominated by the PC, Nintendo, Sony, and Sega. Of course, Matsushita may have a contract in its agreement with The 3DO Company that 3DO is obliged to provide software support and help ease Matsushita's 3DO into the market. This remains to be seen.



Matsushita (working under its consumer brand name of Panasonic) has been involved with Trip Hawkins and the 3DO project since its very beginning in 1993

The other possibility is that Matsushita has no intention of producing a dedicated game machine and will instead integrate the M2 technology into a DVD (Digital Video Disc) standard which may reach US shores within 1996. If so, then Matsushita will have effectively leapfrogged Sony and Nintendo, if not in terms of gameplaying power, but in terms of system flexibility and broader application — a DVD player in every home is the goal. And to quote Sega's Tom Kalinske one more time: "Hypothetically, if someone could make a [game system] and get it into all the homes in this country or into the vast majority of them, would we just want to be a software developer? You bet." Matsushita could steal the bigger prize simply by virtue of a bigger, grander vision (and the resources that come with being a multinational, multibillion dollar corporation, of course).

Obstacles facing the introduction of DVD, however, are numerous. The two most nagging problems being the fact that at introduction, any new DVD player is destined to cost more than the $200 to $300 game machines gameplayers have as an alternative; second, there's the question: Does the general public really need a new video format? Laserdiscs never took off, and what's so wrong with VCRs? Surely, Matsushita believes it has answers.

Overall, the only reasonable conclusion is that Matsushita has made a big investment in some hot technology, presumably for a very good reason. It would seem that its partnership with The 3DO Company in bringing the 32-bit MultiPlayer to market hasn't put it off the videogame business (echoes of Sony's early dalliance with Nintendo before launching its own PlayStation), and it has to be a company that will be a major player in videogaming's future.

ng

It's easy to underestimate the amount of work Matsushita will have to do if it intends to bring a dedicated game machine to market



With the sale of M2, 3DO hands over all responsibility for demonstrating its power

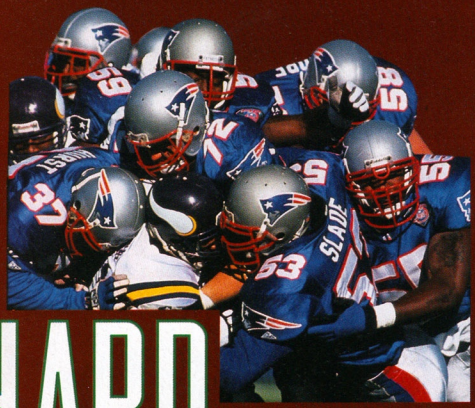
What to look for

96 • Perhaps a strong introduction of an M2-based dedicated videogame machine. In which case we can also expect to see the acquisition of some major game developing talent. (EA has yet to be swallowed... now wouldn't that be irony for Trip Hawkins?) • ...or the incorporation of M2 hardware into Matsushita's DVD plans • ...or perhaps something else that no one outside of Matsushita HQ has thought of yet. • Whatever it is, It will be big • On the other hand, what does Matsushita know about the game industry? If it underestimates the planning and attention to software quality needed to make a big impression, we could all suffer as the market is diluted and confused once again

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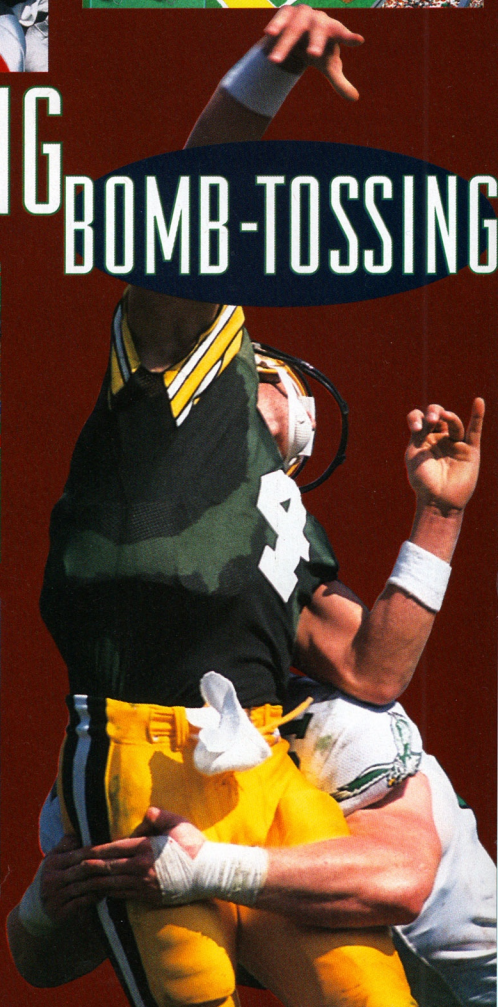


HARD HITTING

BOMB-TOSSING

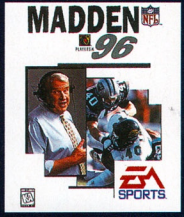








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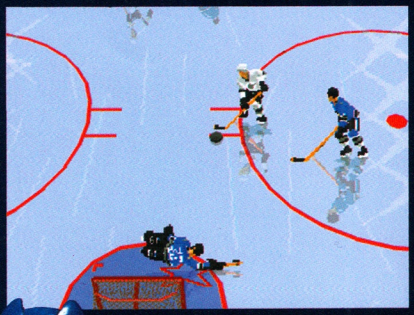
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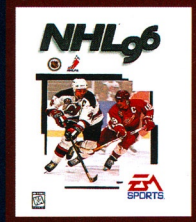


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MONKEY ROCKET-LAUNCHING

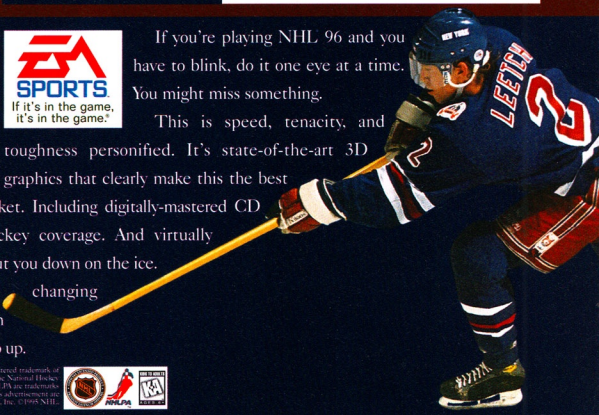


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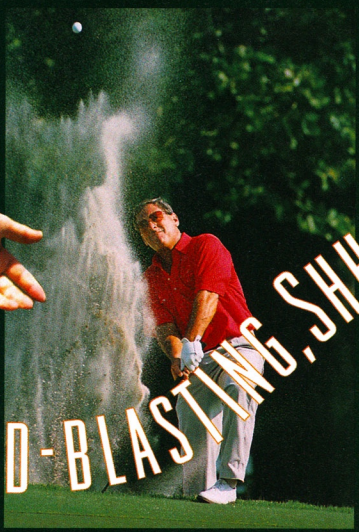
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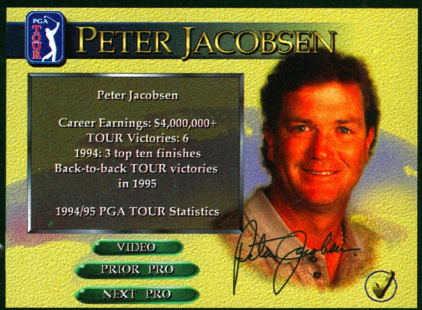
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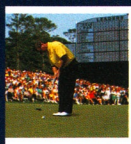


PUTT-BENDING, SAND-BLASTING, SHHHHHH





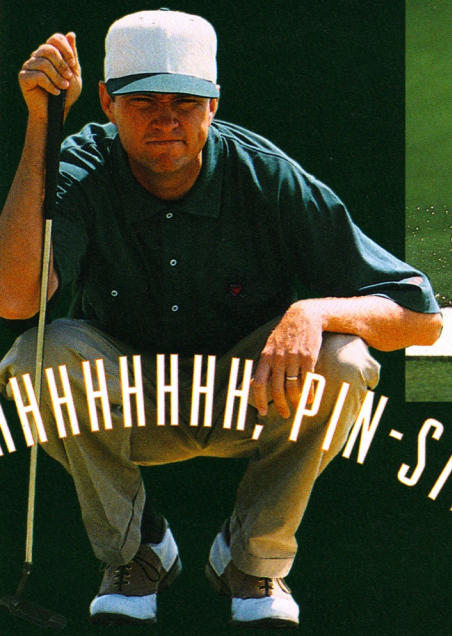
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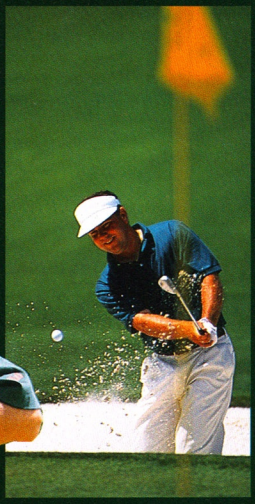


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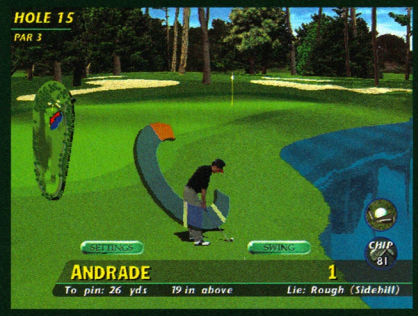
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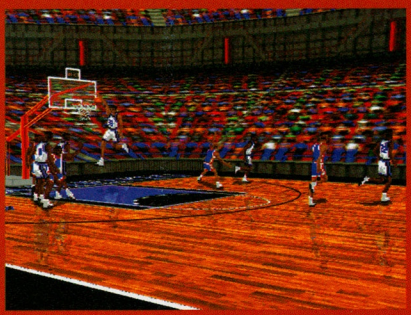






RIM ROCKING FLY SWATTING H



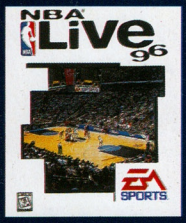








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alphas

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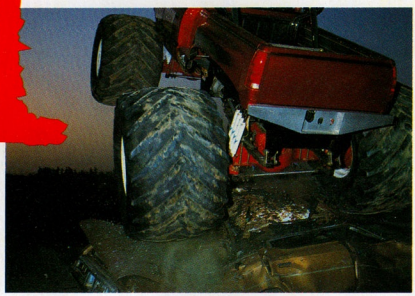
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Monstrous City

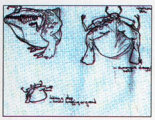
Format: **PlayStation**
Publisher: **Virgin**
Developer: **Northstar Studios**
Release Date: **Third Quarter**
Origin: **US**

Taking a walk on the dark side PlayStation newcomer Northstar Studios prepares a strategy-filled action title that's a lot like playing *SimCity* in reverse

All of the monsters tout dazzling special effects with realistic smoke, fire, and explosions following each damaging onslaught



Like *Rampage*, *Monstrous City* has cashed in on gamers' love of random destruction. And, if you think this looks like a scene from a Godzilla film, you're on to something







These three early sketches portray Northstar Studios designers' somewhat twisted train of thought



Although this robotic invader may not be as gruesome as its gigantic, anarchic allies, it is surely just as devastating

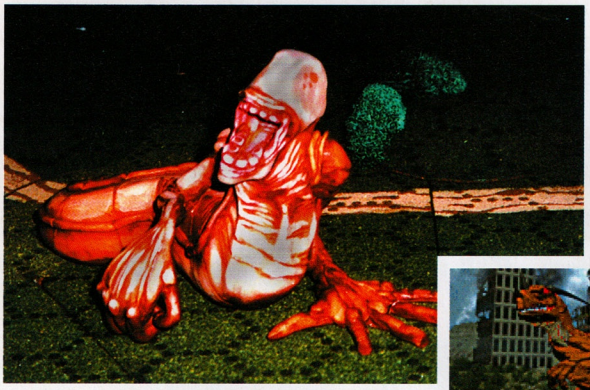
There've been plenty of games that give players a chance to be the monster for awhile, from the design and drive interface of the Commodore's *Mail Order Monsters* through the building-based combat of *Rampage* to Capcom's latest *Street Fighter* clone, *Dark Stalkers*. Oddly enough, none were designed as hugely playable games, instead they depend on the idea itself to draw players in.

Now, taking advantage of the PlayStation's excellent polygon generation and control routines, the developers at Northstar are working on a title that will be impressive on all levels, with fleshy graphics and smooth control, where the player gets not only a chance to walk on the dark side, but also gets a great game to boot.

The premise is simple: You move around the world gaining strength and points by destroying things. The more pain and suffering you deliver, the higher your score. Many of the cities you walk through are based on actual cities, and will contain familiar landmarks for you to destroy with your otherworldly powers. There's plenty of other pleasant things to stomp on as well, from fusion power reactors that may contain life-giving power-ups to the more tame residential areas.

Unfortunately for the player, the futuristic setting of the game ensures that humanity has plenty of high-tech weaponry with which to defend itself.

ng alphas







Monsters come in all shapes and sizes, from twisted mutations (above), to alien machines (above right), to a good old-fashioned lizard (right). It seems the designers used images from both old and new popular cutlure

Even though the game provides full-on action, it has a strong strategic element as you weigh your current energy levels against the power you stand to lose by attacking certain enemies and the points you stand to gain by the attack. The good news is, you've got plenty of tools at your disposal.

At the current stage of development, the team is working on four different monsters, each with their own special powers and weaknesses. Character designs are straight out of a "B" horror film, currently including a Dracula-style occult monster with evil magic, a giant robotic monster with scads of energy beams and other futuristic death weapons, a bizarre mutant, and finally, a good old-fashioned dinosaur á la *Godzilla* or *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms*.



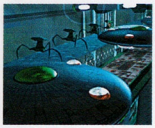
Another early sketch shows the "B" movie feel that the game's developers were looking for. Did anyone say "War of the Worlds?"

Monsters can use intimidation techniques as well, such as roaring, an action that sends humans fleeing in all directions. All of the monsters tout dazzling special effects with realistic smoke, fire, and explosions following each damaging onslaught. As the game wears on and your monster gains strength, it will grow in size and strength, and, in some cases, will mutate to an entirely new form.

But what really sets *Monstrous City* apart is its ambitious use of changing camera angles to recreate the true feel of a monster movie. While moving around the 3D cities, the game uses an over-the-shoulder camera angle enabling players to see both their monster and their surroundings at the same time.

When certain actions take place, such as the player eating a human or perhaps crushing a building beneath his or her feet, the camera switches to an angle that maximizes the carnage. Every visual element is displayed using Northstar's unusual new animation technology which is designed to make polygon movement more realistic. The system lays out a flexible "skin" on top of the polygons, and creates a feel of organic motion far beyond the painful flickering and blocky look of many other polygon games.

Since each game is actually several missions, each requiring different strategies and a separate campaign mode for each monster, the title offers plenty of replay value. And while it's still early in the development process, it's easy to see that *Monstrous City* has the promise to become one of next year's big hits. ng

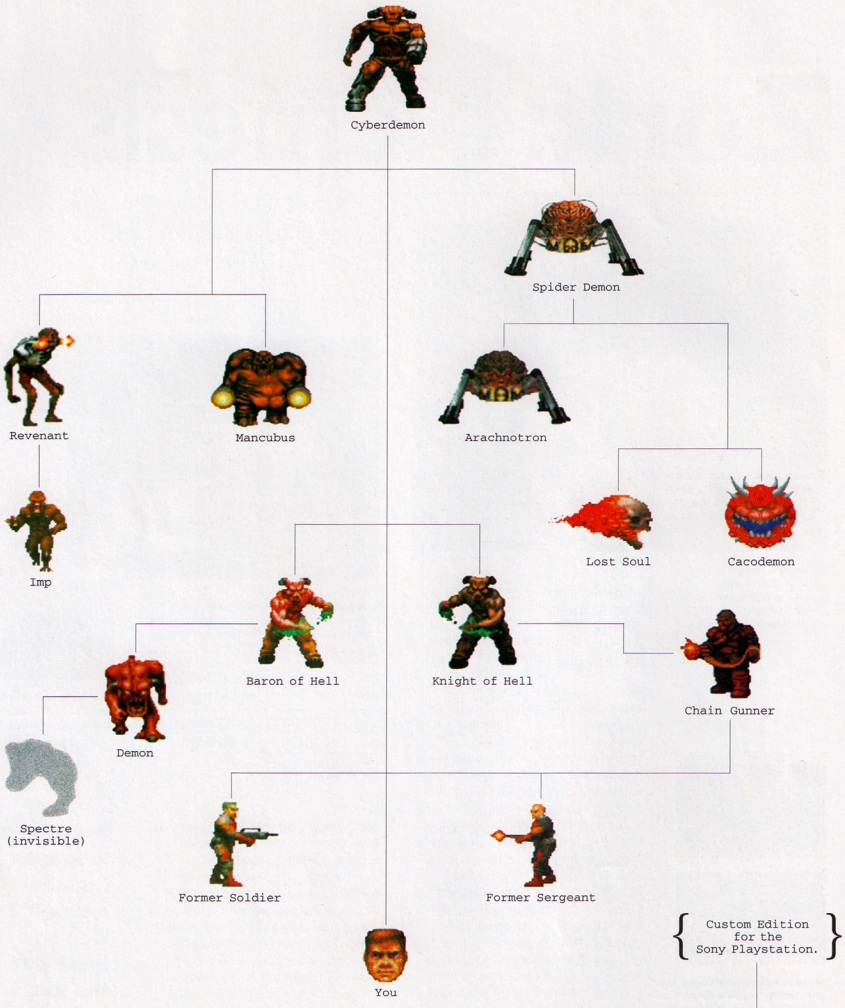






This animation plot set outlines an alien scheme to invade the Earth

{ An introduction to the hierarchy of Doom. }



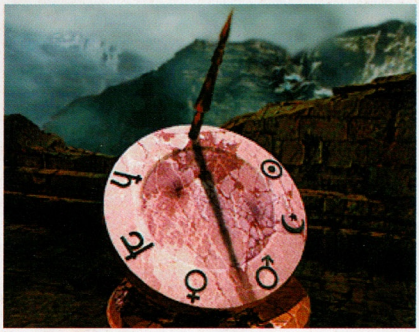
{ Custom Edition for the Sony Playstation. }

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Zork: Nemesis

Activision tries again to bring *Zork* into the graphic age, but can the company please old-time gamers?



Symbolism plays a large part in many of the puzzles in this game. Located above is a mysterious pagan sundial



If you hope to solve the game, you'll need to brush up on your alchemy skills. Note the details of the rendered images



The special effects in the game look like they'll be absolutely stunning





The game scenes are much more majestic than in *Return to Zork*. We hope the puzzles will be up to the same standard

Activision can keep cranking out text adventure anthologies until the end of time, but the real money is with new software. And therein lies a dilemma. Any new games in the *Zork* universe have to both fulfill the expectations of old Infocom fans (a group including most software reviewers) and attract new gamers. A delicate balance must be struck between putting enough memorabilia in to please old timers and not confuse newcomers.

With *Zork: Nemesis*, it looks like they've done it. Rather than treading on dangerous ground by setting the game in an area familiar to fans of the text adventures, they've set it during the "Pax Quendor" that prevailed before the Flatheads came to power. The producers had full access to all the ancillary documentation (manuals, the *New Zork Times*, etc.) from Infocom, and have managed to include enough *Zork* lore to keep even the most Frobozz-wild old-school gamer happy.

Set in the Forbidden Land south of the White House and west of the Frigid River (at the southern fringes of the Great Underground Empire), the game pits you against a mysterious and evil presence. The nexus of the evil is a dark temple where, long before, four alchemists fall prey to the Nemesis. You must discover their secrets and ultimately, vanquish the Nemesis.

Format:	**PC CD-ROM Mac, Saturn**
Publisher:	**Activision**
Developer:	**Activision**
Release Date:	**Spring**
Origin:	**US**

The game has a much darker feel than previous *Zorks*, but it compares well to Activision's previous graphic *Zork* adventure. Disappointingly, the innovative interface of *Return to Zork* was jettisoned in favor of a more point-and-click, less inventory related style of gameplay.

Will the puzzles be as deep as the original text adventures? Maybe not — it may not be possible to make a graphic adventure as complex or as deep as a text-only one.

But *Zork: Nemesis* should hold its own in the graphic adventure class and is definitely a welcome addition to one of the most famous adventure sagas of all time.

Activision managed to include enough *Zork* lore to keep even the most Frobozz-wild old-school gamer happy

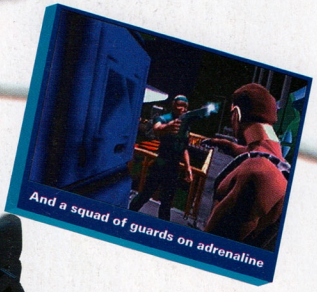
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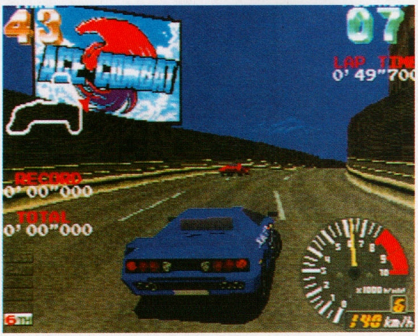
Ridge Racer Revolution

As *Sega Rally* prepares to put another feather in Saturn's cap, Sony's PlayStation is attempting to go one step further in the race for the ultimate driving game



Players will be given the option to participate in a head-to-head style duel with a single computer-controlled car. There will also be a "Free Run" mode where you can race against the clock and save your best times





The graphics do certainly look good, but perhaps just a touch derivative?

Namco will have to deliver something special for PlayStation to stay ahead of Saturn

Format:	**PlayStation**
Publisher:	**Namco**
Developer:	**Namco**
Release Date:	**December**
Origin:	**Japan**

On its early December '94 release, Namco's popular *Ridge Racer* was regarded by many pundits to be the best racing game available on any home platform. Better, most significantly, than Sega's Saturn equivalent, *Daytona USA* (for reasons of arcade authenticity rather than gameplay superiority, in which *Daytona* has the edge on *Ridge Racer*).

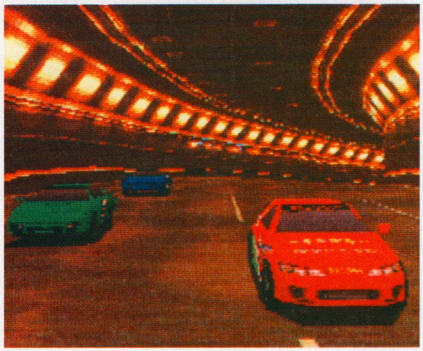
ng alphas

In its early release, *Ridge Racer* was regarded by many to be the best racing game available on any platform

Now, with the impressive looking and near arcade-perfect translation of *Sega Rally* (with none of the problems that plagued *Daytona*) on the way, Namco will have to deliver something special for PlayStation to stay ahead of Saturn.

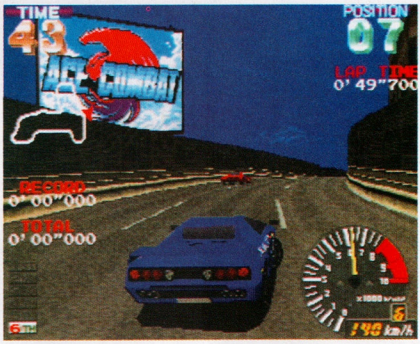
Ridge Racer *Revolution* is the home console sequel to the original *Ridge Racer*. It's not called *Ridge Racer 2* because that name has gone to the arcade link-up version of *Ridge Racer* which featured tweaked graphics and a night-time setting. *Ridge Racer Revolution* will employ many of *Ridge Racer 2*'s more updated features, but its circuits will be different.

In fact, the game will include several alterations to the *Ridge Racer* format. For example, the game system is undergoing a process of modification to provide a greater variety of pregame options. Furthermore, both beginners and advanced cars will be available right at the beginning of the game. This means there will be no need for skilled players to go through all the levels to get a car that fits their abilities.



***Ridge Racer Revolution* will include a link-up option, for which two PlayStations, two monitors, and two copies of the game will be required. The hook-up is highly anticipated**

And despite all of these interesting features and with more to come, these early screen-shots show a game that's strikingly similar to many other current racing titles. So the question is: Can Namco continue to compete with the same material? And just how long can this habitual formula abuse really last? ng





***Revolution*'s cars have been given new decals and more detailed trim**



As with *Ridge Racer 2*, *RR Revolution* will feature a helpful rear-view mirror

4 OUT OF 5 COMBAT PILOTS SURVEYED PICKED IT AS THEIR

ATTACK GUNSHIP

OF CHOICE...



VR Soccer '96

Gremlin Interactive prepares to release a sports title that may change the way we all play games



All of the moves of real soccer are included in the game, from diving goalie saves and swift dribbling to the dreaded slide-tackle

Format:	**PC**
Publisher:	**VR Sports**
Developer:	**Gremlin**
Release Date:	**January**
Origin:	**UK**







In addition to some truly stunning visuals, *VR Soccer '96* will feature an impressive 20-player network mode. Good news for those who work in an office equipped with a high-speed LAN and have 19 close friends

By enabling everyone on the field to be a character, Gremlin has opened up the door for true multiplayer interactivity

As sports games go, soccer titles have only recently started doing well commercially, though they're still not close to the sales of baseball or football titles. *FIFA Soccer* for the Genesis started the change, but now, aiming for the more adult world of the PC, the veteran developers at Gremlin are trying to take the next step. As part of the VR Sports lineup, players can experience all of the action right on the field in a game that will ultimately see light on both the Saturn and the PlayStation as well.

Game features include fully motion-captured participants from 44 international teams with 22 different players on each. Players who aren't happy with the original setup can use the full editing functions to create their own sets of players and then compete in their own custom cups, leagues, and tournaments. The PC version is also to have a phenomenal 20-player network option. A replay option is also included, and each play can be watched from an infinite number of camera angles.

Although it remains to be seen whether US audiences will ever warm up to the idea of soccer despite its slowly rising popularity, *VR Soccer '96* has everything necessary to be not only a big hit, but also a whole new way of playing sports games. By enabling everyone on the field to be a character, Gremlin has opened up the door for true multiplayer interactive gameplay. ng



VR Soccer 96's infinite camera angle options — the bird's eye view here — ensure that you won't miss any of the action

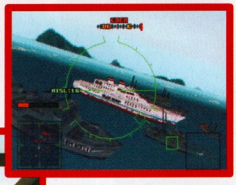
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Origin

As many companies struggle with expansion, Origin has created a corporate structure that encourages both creativity and future growth. So where will founder Richard Garriott go from here?









Worlds away from the cinematic feel of the *WC* series, *Longbow* is shooting for a hard-core sim audience with its new *Jane's* series





Since 1983, Garriott's epic *Ultima* series has undergone many changes, and is now about to enter two new incarnations with *Ultima 9* and a 1,000-player online version

For the past 12 years, Origin systems, for better or for worse, has been pushing the PC to its absolute limits by offering epic titles that use the very latest in video and processor technology. By straining even the most powerful computers with its titles, Origin has managed, often single-handedly, to raise the bar in what is expected out of game sound, graphics, and control, albeit at the expense of low-end computer owners.

The company also forged the way for the creation of blockbuster licenses, including the popular *Ultima*, *Wing Commander*, and *Ultima Underworld* series, with many more set to come in the future. In a relatively short time, Origin has gone from a one-man operation to a driving force in computer entertainment employing more than 300 people and housing some of the greatest creative talents in the industry.

One of the main ways Origin has managed to keep serving up quality product — without falling pray to the corporate blandness that can infect companies when they reach critical mass — is by separating individual development teams into small autonomous and self-sufficient groups. Each is run almost as if it were its own company. And each is small enough to foster creative development while having the resources and facilities of a major production house at their disposal.

Origin has managed to keep serving up quality product without falling prey to corporate blandness

Lord British Prods.

Richard Garriott, as head of Lord British Productions, one of the biggest of these internal groups, still keeps his

ng alphas







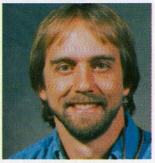




Crusader's violence shows an action edge somewhat uncharacteristic of the typically docile *Origin*. Look for burning bodies and shattering glass as you weave through this game

Although *Crusader* already touts an impressive arsenal, Origin plans an upgrade disc for next year that will expand on the theme









Part of Origin's creative machine: Chris Roberts, *WC* creator (top); Richard Garriott, Origin's founder and head of Lord British Productions (second); Andy Hollis, head of Skunkworks (center); and Warren Spector, of Vested Interest Enterprises (above)

designing hand in the pot by continuing to work on Origin's most prolific property, the *Ultima* series. Currently in development on *Ultima 9*, the team is working on a project that will not only end a trilogy, but will, in fact, end an epic. "*Ultima 9* will bring to a close the *Guardian* trilogy," said Garriott in Austin, Texas. "But it will also end the *Avatar Chronicles*. We also have story ties that will end the *Britannia* trilogy of trilogies as well. *Ultima* fans expecting huge epics will definitely not be disappointed with this game."

In order to ensure an absolutely absorbing product, Garriott and his crew looked back at what players liked and disliked in each of the past *Ultima* titles. "Each *Ultima* in my mind has contained features that were good and were bad, so this time we're stealing everything that was good from each of the past games and adding a host of new stuff," explained Garriott.

"*Ultima 7* had the most detailed world, so we're going to take that detail level, we're including a huge ethic parable like those of *Ultima 5* and *6*, and it will contain the hard-core role-playing elements of the first three games, with a complete set of skills and attributes," he said, adding, "From a technology standpoint, we've tried to add the visual detail levels of *Ultima 8*, but we'll drop that control method."

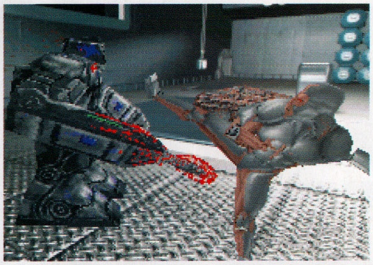
The game will mark an ending of the original *Ultima* universe, but as Garriott says: "I still get great personal joy out of doing this product line, what we're doing here is simply giving ourselves an opportunity to make a fresh start. There will be an *Ultima 10*, and probably an *11*, *12*, and *13*, as long as people still enjoy playing them."

Maverick Prods.

Maverick Productions, headed up by the accomplished Chris Roberts, is responsible for the *Wing Commander* series and other projects that are heavy in video and cinematics. Constantly flying between Austin, TX, and Hollywood, CA, Roberts and his team are deeply involved in the completion of

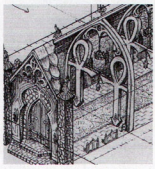


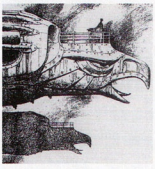


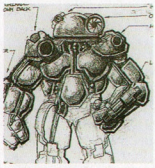




Combining cinematics with fully interactive controls, *Bioforge* became one of the first true "interactive movies"







Early sketches for several new titles show the dedication to detail the design team places on even the simplest stages of production

the *Wing Commander 4* project. *WC4* is only one of several projects Maverick's planned. "We've also got a game called *Silver Heart* that should be coming out next year," said Roberts. "It's going to be an adventure-fantasy story in the cinematic fold of *Wing Commander*, with a script by Michael Moorcock [of *Elric and Corum* fame]." The new title will feature an entirely new universe with which the team hopes to start a new franchise, he explained.

As a combination of first-person action for exploration, and third-person action for solving puzzles, the entire title creates a seamless interface that doesn't interfere with the player's enjoyment. The spell-casting is particularly cool, as it uses an interface that requires skill — you use the mouse to control your hand to trace the different spells in the air. "If you trace the spell correctly it glows in the air, enthused Roberts, adding, "If you know a couple of spells, you can even try your own combinations." Other projects in Maverick's future include a *WC* movie, a sequel to *Privateer*, and a television shows based on the *Privateer* universe sometime in 1997.

Vested Interest Prods.

Warren Spector, a games purist and leader of Origin's Vested Interest Productions, has a design philosophy in sharp contrast to that of Robert's video-heavy epics. "One of the things I'm trying to do in my career is to produce every kind of realtime point-of-view game I can," enthuses Spector. "By far the most compelling games to me are the ones where you look through the character's eyes," he said. The team's current project, *CyberMage: Darklight Awakening* is a perfect example: a first-person action game with more of a brain than most of its hack-and-slash counterparts. "We're trying to give players that adrenaline rush", explained Spector, "but still give them a reason for doing everything that they do. For

In order to get a truly realistic look, Origin used motion capture techniques to create virtual actors who move and fight like humans





***Cybermage*, despite its strategies and puzzles, is worlds beyond the glut of recent *Doom* clones**

ng alphas







In addition to a plethora of video, *Wing Commander 4* will also feature plenty of fully rendered plot animations

example, you can side with the good guys or with the bad guys in a battle, it's a world where all of the characters have a life of their own."

While the team is currently working on three or four different games which it's hesitant to speak about, Spector did state, "we're also working on a realtime strategy game, with a new development team headed up by Harvey Smith, called *Hard Core*. It'll be an action game that may provide us with an engine for *Ultima Underworld 3*, and a game that's not quite *Myst*, not quite *Bioforge*, called *Gateway of the Jackal* that we hope will appeal to a female as well as male audience."

Skunkworks Prods.

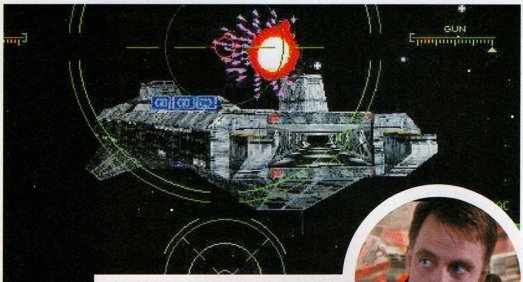
Andy Hollis, one of the earliest members of Microprose, is now heading up Skunkworks, Origin's team in charge of flight simulators. Currently working on a new series, starting with a helicopter sim called *Longbow*, using the branding and information from the popular *Jane's* military reference books, the team is positioning itself to create a new license for the company that stands to be as valuable as any of the team's other resources. "I was brought in at Origin to do the same kinds of things I was doing at Microprose, and given pretty much *carte blanche* to do the sorts of things I wanted to do. The big, overall gameplan with this stuff is to combine the mechanics of a Microprose product with the production values of an Origin product. The *Longbow* effort in particular is real exciting stuff," he said.

The team went high-end on the sort of look it was attempting to get — SVGA, 640X480 at 256 colors while including historical missions the Apache has been involved in, like Desert Storm. The game will also contain a random mission generator and a mini-mission builder.





Another sequel planned is *Privateer 2*, a follow up to Robert's earlier space/trading sim





As the *WC* universe grows, more titles and even a full length feature film are planned to expand the license

Loose Cannon Prods.

Last but not least comes Loose Cannon Productions, headed up by Tony Zuereveck, responsible for *Crusader* and its soon-to-be-in-development sequel, *Crusader 2*. The new game offers players a realtime light-sourced world to explore, new weaponry and enemy types, and best of all, a full multiplayer option that enables four agents to explore the building and interact with each other at the same time. Loose Cannon is also working on a mission disk for the first *Crusader*, and if time permits, a realtime strategy wargame in the vein of *Command and Conquer*.

With this many creative minds working under one roof, Origin can't help but succeed in the coming months. And yet the fact is, it remains to be seen whether each sub-company will carry its success outside of Origin's traditional territory and into other media.

ng

"The spell-casting is particularly cool, as the whole thing uses an interface that requires skill"

Chris Roberts, referring to Origin's *Silver Heart*



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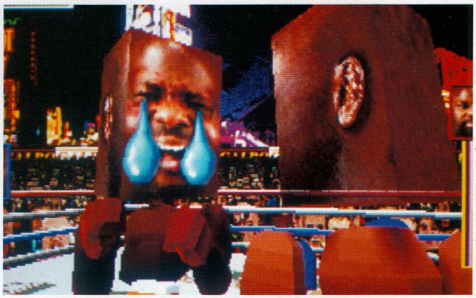
Funky Head Boxers

Sega tries a humorous tack with its latest Titan arcade game, but will gamers take a swing at it, or is it simply a passing novelty?

Format:	**Arcade**
Publisher:	**Sega**
Developer:	**Sega of Japan**
Release Date:	**winter**
Origin:	**Japan**



Boxers' Cube-shaped heads provide players with a larger target, while their expressions change according to the kind and power of the hit



Each boxers' extraordinary moves, from superman-type flying knockouts to wind-up uppercuts, match their bizarre, unusual facial expressions



The menu options are very simple: choose a player and then box. After beating these guys, you'll have to face the heavyweight champ

The Titan board arcade system is Sega's attempt to kill two birds with one stone. First, since it is basically an enhanced Saturn on an arcade board, it will let Sega port games quickly from the arcade to the Saturn (or, as in the case of *Virtua Fighter Remix*, vice-versa). Second, it enables Sega to penetrate a market currently dominated by SNK's Neo-Geo system — pool rooms, bowling alleys, arcades, and liquor stores.

The inexpensive and easily upgradeable (games come on carts or CDs) system enables Sega to get machines in locations that just won't spring for the latest Model 2 board games, like *Virtua Fighter 2* or *Sega Rally*. *Funky Head Boxers* is one of the first Titan releases.

At first glance, this one is just plain weird. It's a polygonal, 3D boxing game with fairly realistic looking characters, except for one thing. The boxers (as well as the ref and audience) have enormous cubes for heads: cubes that are photo-realistic, texture-mapped faces. When punched, the faces change expression and the cubes distort and bend. There are a variety of boxers to choose from, each with different statistics, abilities, and of course, funky heads.

The humor level in the game is fairly high (and may be its strongest attraction), and the gameplay, while certainly not at *Virtua Fighter* level, looks good. Each boxer has his own special moves in addition to the standard punches, and there are some hidden moves as well.

It's an open question whether or not this has the depth to merit a purchase once the inevitable Saturn version ships, but this is definitely one coin-op to pop a quarter or two into when it shows up at your local bowling alley. ng

The game's humor level is fairly high and the gameplay, while not at *Virtua Fighter* level, looks good



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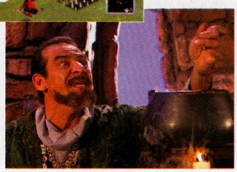
Critically acclaimed by everyone and their grandmother. Maybe it's the cool 3D characters or texture-mapped backgrounds. Maybe not.





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(*Game Pro* 3DO™ review.)



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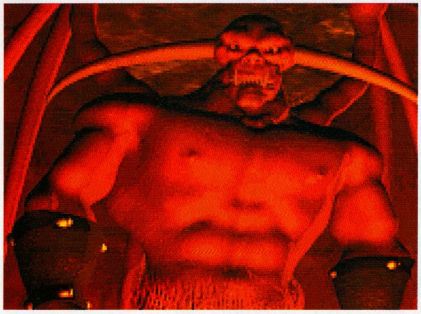
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Diablo

Thanks to impressive new technology, *Diablo* brings new life to the PC RPG

Format:	**PC CD-ROM**
Publisher:	**Blizzard**
Developer:	**Condor**
Release Date:	**spring**
Origin:	**US**



As fitting the name, *Diablo* features infernal graphics. The art is well done, which should serve to enhance Blizzard's already excellent reputation



The 3/4 isometric view is making a comeback across the game industry, and for good reason. This perspective is used effectively in *Diablo*

The most exciting thing about the game is the multiplayer options

At first glance, *Diablo* looks like it might even be a step back for PC role-playing games — the view is a 3/4 overhead perspective, similar to the many mundane console RPGs. Closer inspection, however, reveals a game with an impressive array of new features, which should greatly enhance the role-playing genre and may even draw many newcomers into this somewhat insular branch of gaming.

The story will be familiar to anyone who's ever played a fantasy game. As a young boy, you return to your village to find it razed, your family dead. Exploration of the countryside reveals that a similar fate has befallen all the neighboring towns, except for one, which, although almost destroyed, still has some inhabitants left. Talking with townspeople quickly reveals the presence of an ancient and nameless evil located in the labyrinths beneath a dark temple — one you must explore to avenge your family. While this is not exactly an original concept, it's not unexpected in an RPG.

What's original is the number of new technologies introduced in the game. First, all environments are fantastic looking, prerendered 3D. Second, the game has realtime light-sourcing, which, thanks to some innovative palette work, is far beyond what we've seen before. This must be seen to be appreciated fully. Third, at the start of each game, the labyrinth's levels are





The temple from beneath which all your troubles emanate (left). Another building in the town above the labyrinth, which can be fully explored



Character design was a high priority at Condor

ng alphas



It's possible to totally solve the game and not see all the art tile sets included





The game features realtime light-sourcing which adds an intriguing feel of realism to the game. Innovative graphics are becoming a Blizzard trademark





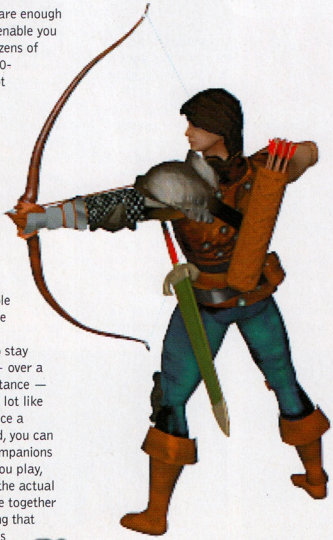




The enemies you'll face are fiendish and tough

completely redesigned. There are enough scenery objects and items to enable you to move through the game dozens of times (Blizzard estimates a 30-hour completion time) and not see every room, forest, or courtyard. And the developers don't mean that on the second time played you may discover a little alcove with a rock in it unseen the first time — there are entire art sets that change from game to game.

The most exciting thing, though, are the multiplayer options. You're able to play with three other people across either a network or a modem. Players don't have to stay together and can even fight — over a particular magic item, for instance — which makes the experience a lot like playing a traditional RPG. Once a multiplayer game is generated, you can also enter it alone, so your companions don't have to be there when you play, which is a nice feature, since the actual logistics of getting four people together for 30 hours is the kind of thing that drive people to computer RPGs in the first place. ng



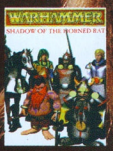
There's nothing like playing a hero who has to avenge his family's death

The game has realtime light-sourcing, which, thanks to some innovative palette work, is far beyond what we've seen before

I SEE THE WORLD AS MY VERY OWN EMPIRE

FILLED WITH ORCS, DWARVES, ELVES AND OTHER CREATURES THAT ALL EXIST FOR THE SOLE PURPOSE OF HELPING ME OVERCOME THE FORCES OF CHAOS. OF COURSE, IF MY OLD LADY WANTS TO SEE IT WITH ME, I HAVE TO POP THIS BACK INTO OUR PLAYSTATION.

WARHAMMER
shadow of the horned rat



With a slew of battle scenarios, texture-mapped 3D graphics and the rush that only comes from leading a bunch of medieval misfits into war, it's no surprise some people find Warhammer: Shadow of the Horned Rat™ to be, shall we say, a bit mind-altering.

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WARHAMMER: WHAT TO PLAY ON YOUR PLAYSTATION.™

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AGES 13+

Marathon 2

Heralded as the savior of Mac games, *Marathon* did for Macs what *Doom* did for PCs. And now there's a sequel...



Format:	**Macintosh**
Publisher:	**Bungie**
Developer:	**Bungie**
Release Date:	**TBA**
Origin:	**US**





***Marathon 2* promises the anticipated bloody carnage, and more**

Marathon first appeared on the Apple Macintosh in early 1995, in the wake of the first-person perspective craze. Mac owners worldwide went crazy for *Marathon,* in essence a *Doom* clone: It was for Mac owners what Rubik's cube was for puzzle freaks.

Hardly surprising. Exercising superlative gameplay, often outclassing *Doom* by requiring the user to have a brain, showing beautiful hi-res graphics (high-end machines could experience sharp, crisp action), and in-your-face network carnage, with up to eight players destroying anything that moved, *Marathon* was deservedly a classic.

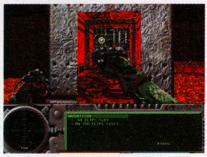
Ten months later and *Marathon 2: Durandal,* is soon to hit the streets. The plot continues where *Marathon* left off. After recapturing the alien-infested space ship, the *UESC Marathon,* you are beamed down to the aliens' home to finish off the business once and for all.

So what's new? Visually, the screen display has been altered. Play occurs on a cinema-style panoramic screen, more accurately capturing a sense of realistic vision. And like *Marathon,* the Mac's sound chip has been exploited to its extreme. Another significant change is the ambient sound effects.

Marathon 2 is guaranteed to be a smash hit on the Mac, where perhaps on the PC it would struggle. The 3D engine is at the high end of the *Doom*-clone spectrum, and the gameplay is as good as, if not better.

With any luck the Macintosh *Marathon* vs. PC *Doom* feud will grow to be as big as the historical Spectrum-Commodore 64 commotion was back in the early 1980s.

Play occurs on a cinema-style panoramic screen, capturing a sense of realistic vision











The game leads the player through a sequence of plotlines, described by the frequently placed computer terminals found on the aliens' home planet

When I'm not busy extracting molars

I like to jump into my space fighter or mechanized warrior suit and save the earth from an ancient alien race. When I'm finished, I take the CD out of my PlayStation® and hide it in a Men At Work jewel case, where my kids would never look.



With live action video, seamlessly rendered graphics and three types of gameplay, The Raven Project™ is one space fighting game you just might want to keep to yourself. (However, if you still belong to the Men At Work fan club, might we suggest Loverboy, Twisted Sister or Milli Vanilli.)

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THE RAVEN PROJECT: WHAT TO PLAY ON YOUR PLAYSTATION.™

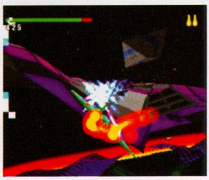
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Star Fighter

Just as 3DO is being cold-shouldered by game fans who desire more power and are now able to purchase a PlayStation or Saturn, another surprising title could make heads turn...







The explosions in *Star Fighter* fill the screen full of color. One excellent feature is the scorching of grassland that occurs as your laser strafes the landscape. When buildings are close to the craft, they appear detailed and fine, but severe distance clipping (used to speed up 3DO's relatively sluggish hardware) causes scenery to "jump" into view. Some levels occur in a computer simulator, recognizable by the rainbow landscapes (above)

At a time when 3DO is being defeated by next generation hardware at every battle, it requires more killer titles (as exemplified by *Bladeforce* and *FIFA Soccer*) to see a turning of the console's fortunes.

In *Star Fighter*, the plot follows a young pilot's training through a starfleet academy, at first learning basic flying movements and strategies, while later progressing to complex group attacks. In other words, it's a flight shooter.

However, the 3D engine really makes a lasting impression. The majority of missions take place over rolling hills, providing for some lovely texture-mapping to push 3DO to its limits. Fly over the sea and the waves ripple beneath you. Blast the mountain side and the grass flares up, dying down to reveal a scorched wasteland below.

However, to counter-balance 3DO's aging technology, *Star Fighter* heavily clips distant scenery. Usually the action is so feverish that "flying blind" does not affect the gameplay, but often, when distant targets are essential to complete the mission, constantly referring to the map is burdensome.

As the gaming community becomes more aware of 3DO's limitations, it's essential for programmers to discover the hardware's hidden abilities. If *Star Fighter*'s example is anything to go by, that time may be sooner than skeptics think.

ng

Format:	**3DO**
Publisher:	**Studio 3DO**
Developer:	**Krisalis**
Release Date:	**winter**
Origin:	**US**

The 3D engine really makes a lasting impression. The majority of missions take place over rolling hills, providing for some lovely texture-mapping



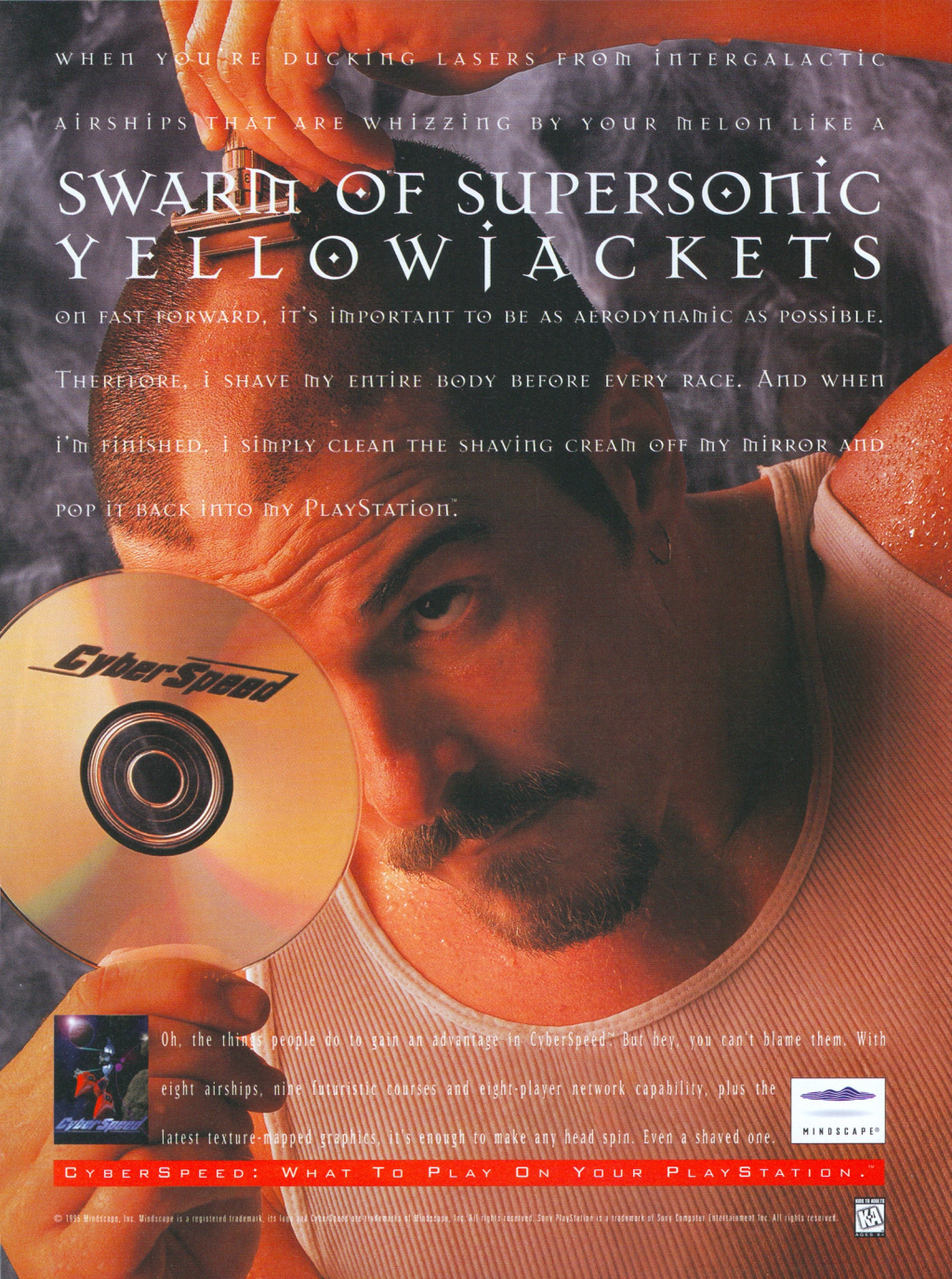


The "Trash TV" level whips along at an exhilarating 30 fps. The on-board computer regularly displays your squad's messages (left)

WHEN YOU'RE DUCKING LASERS FROM INTERGALACTIC AIRSHIPS THAT ARE WHIZZING BY YOUR MELON LIKE A

SWARM OF SUPERSONIC YELLOWJACKETS

ON FAST FORWARD, IT'S IMPORTANT TO BE AS AERODYNAMIC AS POSSIBLE. THEREFORE, I SHAVE MY ENTIRE BODY BEFORE EVERY RACE. AND WHEN I'M FINISHED, I SIMPLY CLEAN THE SHAVING CREAM OFF MY MIRROR AND POP IT BACK INTO MY PLAYSTATION.



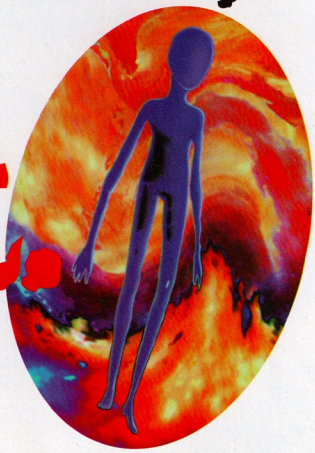
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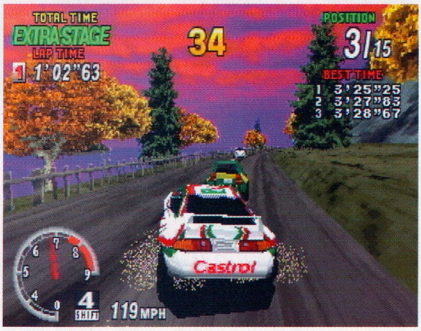
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AM3

Format: **Saturn**
Publisher: **Sega**
Developer: **AM3**
Release Date: **December**

AM3's *Sega Rally* is set to shift Saturn's stature up a gear when it's unveiled at year's end. NEXT Generation interviews its creators to see what's under *Rally*'s hood



Sitting in the consumer department of Sega, near Haneda airport in Tokyo, are Atuhiko Nakamura and Tetsuya Mizuguchi — both key figures in the development of the Saturn conversion of *Sega Rally*. Nakamura is *Sega Rally*'s director, and Mizuguchi is producer of both the Saturn and arcade versions of the cross-country racer.

At this stage the game is approaching 60% complete — there is no background music and a distinct absence of a co-pilot's voice to guide players around the winding tracks — and yet it is already a convincing replica of a state-of-the-art coin-op. The background graphics are almost finished and all four tracks have been implemented to an impressive level of accuracy. Only the difficulty setting and the finer side of the car's handling remain — elements that usually take time to be perfected.

There's no doubt that *Sega Rally*, along with *Virtua Fighter 2*, authenticates the Saturn's much underrated 3D abilities — it's easily the most impressive example yet of the Saturn's abilities. The game runs at 30 frames per second (instead of *Daytona*'s 20 to 25 fps), there's little visible scenery update, and the programmers have even managed a full-screen

"Fans of rally cars will not be disappointed by the driving sensation of *Rally*. The drift will be very realistic"

Tetsuya Mizuguchi, producer of the arcade and Saturn versions of *Sega Rally*

ng alphas





The development of the *Sega Rally* coin-op took 10 months and included a trip to the Indonesian Rally where the team was able to meet a few famous drivers

There's no doubt that *Sega Rally* authenticates Saturn's much under-rated 3D. It's easily the most impressive example yet of Saturn's abilities

display, which is something they couldn't manage in the NTSC version of *Daytona*. In every respect, *Sega Rally* is as well crafted and impressive as *Ridge Racer* on PlayStation — as reassuring for Sega as it is for Saturn owners.

NEXT Generation spoke to both men in the final stages of the title's conversion where a more complete version of the game was shown.

NG: There are huge differences between Saturn and Model 2 architecture. How do you convert such a processor-intensive game to a less powerful unit?

Atuhiko: It's a little bit technical to explain, but essentially we're making a new game using the same data. The program itself is completely different — because of the differences between Model 2's and Saturn's screen refresh rate we had to reprogram the game from scratch.



The Toyota Celica (above) is slightly less manageable than the Lancia Delta

Tetsuya: It's not possible to make a direct conversion. First, the number of polygons used is different on both versions. Moreover, the polygon textures are very different. The Model 2 uses some monochrome texturing while the Saturn uses full-color textures. Because the Saturn version displays fewer polygons, we needed to use special techniques to create the 3D impression.

NG: Will the Saturn version of the game replicate the arcade version? If no, what are you going to change?

Atuhiko: Generally speaking, it will be very similar. The game will include an arcade mode identical to the arcade version. However, for obvious technical reasons the conversion cannot be identical. The arcade version used a Model 2 board and Saturn version's resolution is, of course, lower, but fans of the arcade game will experience exactly the same sensation of driving when playing the Saturn version. We are also making an original mode for the Saturn game which lets you customize certain aspects of the car including the suspension, traction, and transmission. These aspects directly affect the handling of the cars.

Tetsuya: Because the arcade *Sega Rally* was written specifically as an arcade game, we're now working in cooperation with the consumer team and realizing those features that will interest the home player. For the home version we are considering these more precisely, like tire settings, for example. In essence, however, we both really like









The tracks from top left, clockwise: Desert, Forest, Mountain, and the luscious Lakeside

cars and want to make a game with as much realism as possible which, of course, is easily understandable by the player. But we also want to make a game that's realistic for the mainstream as well as satisfying die-hard fanatics [known as *otaku* in Japan]. For example, in order to make the "time attack mode" more interesting we are going to include a special feature, but we are currently applying for the patent so we can't talk about it.

Another new point will be the 3D sound — we want Saturn's sound engine to be far superior. Of course, as with *Daytona*, it will be possible to use Sega's steering column rather than a joypad. We would also like to include a new car in Saturn's original mode, and add another special stage — if we have time to make it, of course.

NG: Are you going to include different driving views in the Saturn version, such as inside the car, outside, or from above?

Atuhiko: The Saturn version will have the same number of views as in the arcade — two. The arcade mode will be exactly the same but we would like to add a supplementary view to Saturn's original mode. The camera position would be higher, but nothing has been finalized yet. First, we want to make a perfect conversion of the arcade game. Then we will make an original Saturn version with supplementary points and options. We could change many points in the conversion but we don't want to lose the arcade feeling.

NG: Racing games are often enhanced by a link-up facility. Will it be possible for two players to compete at once?

Atuhiko: After finishing the arcade-perfect conversion we will consider it. In a few weeks we'll choose one of a few options — split-screens, link cable, etc. — to implement. The main problem is that of processing power. With two players, the Saturn has to deal with twice as much data as before, meaning we may have a lower quality game, lower quality textures for example. It is not worth sacrificing quality just to make this sort of game.

NG: How many polygons are needed for each of the cars?

Atuhiko: In comparison to the arcade, the number of polygons is lower. The arcade version, with a Model 2 board, has a more precise car with better details. Although Model 2 is more powerful than Saturn, the design techniques used are different, so ultimately Saturn's cars are very similar.

NG: Many games rely on the knowledge of the development teams. Are the teams for Saturn *Rally* and arcade *Rally* the same?

Atuhiko: No, they are completely different, but Mr. Mizuguchi is coordinating each team the same way.

NG: In the present version, the cars seem very speedy and the stages are almost finished. In fact, the game seems almost complete. With the release being slated for December, what is left to do?

Tetsuya: The game may look almost finished, but we have many things to tweak, like game settings for example.

NG: Is the game using the new OS system? [the SGL, Sega Graphics Library, developed by AM2 enabling better 3D graphics on the Saturn]

Tetsuya: Not at all. The OS was incomplete when we began the project.



The Lancia Delta bounces off the luscious autumnal Lakeside track





The difference between the arcade and Saturn versions of *Sega Rally* are fairly plain. But can you tell the difference?

"Honestly, I really didn't believe we could make a conversion as good as this. The speed of the game is superb and I'm very satisfied"

Tetsuya Mizuguchi, producer of the coin-op and Saturn version of *Sega Rally*

AM3 Gameography

July 1992	*Wory o sagase*	Variety
March 1993	*Dark Age*	Fighting
April 1993	*Title Fight*	Fighting sports
September 1993	*Sonic the Hedgehog*	Action
February 1994	*Jurassic Park*	Shooting
March 1994	*Dragon Ball Z*	Fighting
April 1994	*Star Wars* *Hard Dunk*	Shooting Sports
February 1995	*Sega Rally Championship*	Driving
May 1995	*PakuPaku Animal*	Puzzle

ng alphas





One of the greatest qualities of *Sega Rally*, whether arcade or Saturn version, is the game's brilliant powerslides

But even without the new OS we succeeded in making a good conversion. We have some very good programmers.

Atuhiko: In particular the programmers have created some excellent clipping techniques — they are very precise and are more sophisticated than those in other driving games. You can notice this most when the car is moving extremely slowly, the track's update is very precise.

NG: How many people are working in your team, and what experience do they have with racing games?

Tetsuya: We have six designers and programmers. Mr. Hatori did *Virtua Racing Deluxe* on the Genesis. Personally, I'm a supervisor and the only member of the staff from AM3.

Atuhiko: When forming the Saturn development group we tried to employ a programmers and designers who specialized in car racing games.

NG: What new projects are coming up?

Tetsuya: Well, we have *Manx T.T.*, which is based on the British race in the Isle of Mann [the team spent time out there gathering data for the game]. We've adopted the same control system as *Hang-On*, but placed the game in a new, ultra-realistic cabinet.

NG: With racing games in vogue, do you think Sega Rally has any competition?





The Lakeside (top) and the Mountain (above) levels include very narrow and winding roads only the skilled driver can handle while maintaining a lead



In the earlier levels, as in this picture, the artificial intelligence is often quite tame. Opponent cars are easily passable, and don't nudge you much

Tetsuya: Maybe *Ridge Racer Revolution*. But until we see the finished *Sega Rally* we won't know.

NG: Has your schedule been slashed thanks to the knowledge gained from programming the arcade version?

Tetsuya: We began in April this year, meaning this present conversion has taken only seven months so far.

NG: What extra work has been done in developing the Saturn version?

Tetsuya: For the arcade version we spent two weeks measuring the different parameters of the tracks. For the Saturn version we also made some effort to improve the game. We consulted Mr. Fujimoto [a rally expert], to assist with the new game settings. We also met him in Indonesia during the 1995 Indonesian Rally last July. We spent three days studying the cars and the way they drove. We examined tires and made tests of driving techniques.

Atuhiko: We wanted to make a very realistic game. However, for increased speed and hence better gameplay we also wanted to avoid complicated settings. We spent a long time studying real cars – fans of rally cars will not be disappointed by the driving sensation. The drift will be very realistic.

NG: What do you think of the conversion from the coin-op?

Tetsuya: To be honest, I really didn't believe we could make a conversion as good as this [laughs]. The speed of the game is superb. We are also on time for the release date – with a December deadline, we've got the time to perfect it. I suppose it helps that our team is very confident, everything we've tried so far has worked [laughs]. ng







Extreme powerslides on the dirt surfaces easily convert into 360° turns



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Virtua Fighter 2

Virtua Fighter is the game that sold the Saturn. Now the sequel promises what was previously thought impossible









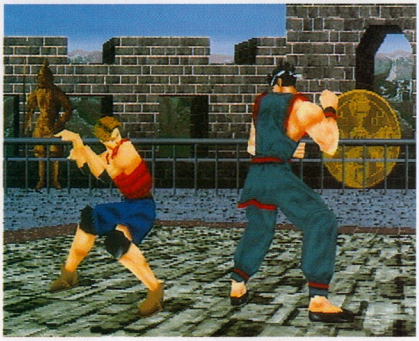
***VF2* on Saturn promises to contain all of the fluid animation that made the arcade version such a smash hit**

Format:	**Saturn**
Publisher:	**Sega**
Developer:	**Sega AM2**
Release Date:	**December**
Origin:	**Japan**

The *Virtua Fighter* series has been, and will continue to be, the yardstick by which all next generation arcade and console fighting games will be measured for a long time coming. This is especially true in light of Sega AM2's most recent and near-brilliant conversion of *Virtua Fighter 2* to the somewhat ailing Saturn.

Sega's premiere Saturn title redefined the fighter genre, introducing more believable 3D characters and a fluidity of animation that had never before been captured. Since then Sega has faced a powerful combo in the form of *Battle Arena Toshinden* and *Tekken* and there are more lethal weapons on the way: *Tekken 2* and *Soul Edge* (previewed in NG 12). However, Sega's well-placed and timely counter attack, *Virtua Fighter 2*, is scheduled for a December release in Japan.

The latest version, shown at the JAMMA show in October, was the first playable demo of the game seen. Though it was only 40% complete at that point, some improvements over previous versions are visible. Most significantly the features of the fighters are becoming more defined: shadows to the face have been added and the fighters' facial gestures are more realistic and intimidating. Furthermore, according to Keiji Okayasu (head of development on *Virtua Fighter 2* for Saturn), all the special moves have now been implemented successfully.



***Virtua Fighter 2* includes a few features not found in the coin-op: a Team Mode (five players play an opponent's five); and a Learning Mode as well**



The greatly improved two-dimensional background scenery, such as the wall (top), scales smoothly in and out to hide the lack of polygons. It is easy to see here how the definition and shadows have greatly improved

From the early version NEXT Generation played, it looks as though *VF2* is going to be a truly ground-breaking release. This is perhaps partially due to the fact that programmers are finally learning to use Saturn's unique *VDP2* (video display processor) chip. The chip can generate and manipulate 2D backgrounds, leaving the twin processors free to deal with the fighters themselves. The result

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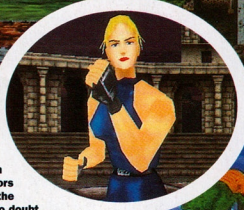














The eight characters from the arcade version will be accurately duplicated on Saturn *Virtua Fighter 2*. If early indicators fulfill their potential, the game will be the most impressive Saturn title to date. No doubt this game alone will sell thousands of Saturn units

is swift, elegant animation at 60 frames per second — that's the same speed and fluidity as the *VF2* coin-op and *Tekken*, too, a remarkable feat.

With programmers now learning the ins and outs of the VDP 2 chip, it could very well be the key to success for Sega: PlayStation does not have an equivalent chip, and demands for better animation and more realistic movement are placing greater and greater pressure on each console's processing power.

It seems that, in terms of hardware, the next battle between Sony and Sega may very well be the most telling... ng

The result is swift, elegant animation at 60 fps — the same speed and fluidity as the *VF2* coin-op and *Tekken*, too, a remarkable feat

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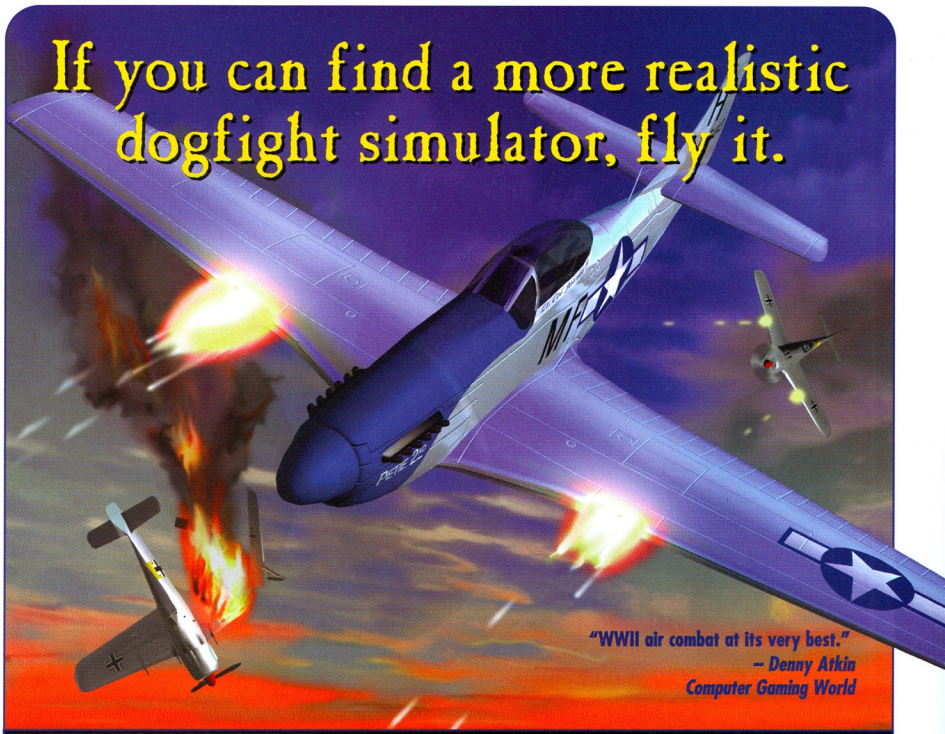
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Total NBA

Sony's first entry into the world of basketball simulations is a graphic *tour de force* which promises an equally high standard of playability

Format:	**PlayStation**
Publisher:	**SCE**
Developer:	**SCE**
Release Date:	**January**
Origin:	**UK**

Total NBA is the first game to be produced at Sony's own London development studio, so it's an important release for a company which, until now, has been criticized for a lack of in-house development.

But starting off with a basketball title hasn't made things very easy. Most types of sports sims (notably soccer, tennis, and football), have a couple of benchmark titles and room in the market for several pretenders. Basketball, however, usually supports one supreme title and little else. Acclaim's newly released *NBA Jam: Tournament Edition* currently holds the basketball crown on PlayStation and is a respected game. Only a near-landmark title could usurp it.

Characteristically, Sony has not taken the challenge lightly. *Total NBA* looks stunning. Each player is made from 500 textured and Gouraud-shaded polygons, rendered at 30 frames per second. These impressive statistics enable the players to retain an unparalleled degree of realism as they race down the court, pass, and even slam-dunk without a polygon glitch in sight. Jules Burt, producer and senior software engineer for SCE Europe, recently highlighted the extent of *Total NBA*'s graphic excellence to NEXT Generation with a *Tekken* analogy: "Tekken has two full hierarchy bodies (3D skeletons) driven by motion capture and placed in limited backgrounds. We've managed to get 10 of those on screen, within a complex environment." The court alone is made up of 2,500 polygons, so the engine actually shifts 225,000 polygons per second.

Other features include selectable camera angles and an in-game camera that pans and zooms in on the action. *Total NBA* enables players to tweak the rules of the game to create their own balance between sim and arcade game.

According to Jules Burt, *Total NBA*'s designers had three objectives: to exhibit the PlayStation's power; to use motion capture to maximize realism; and to set a new standard for sports simulations. They may have succeeded on all counts. ng









With 225,000 polygons a second and motion captured animation, *Total NBA* promises life-like players and unparalleled fluidity of movement



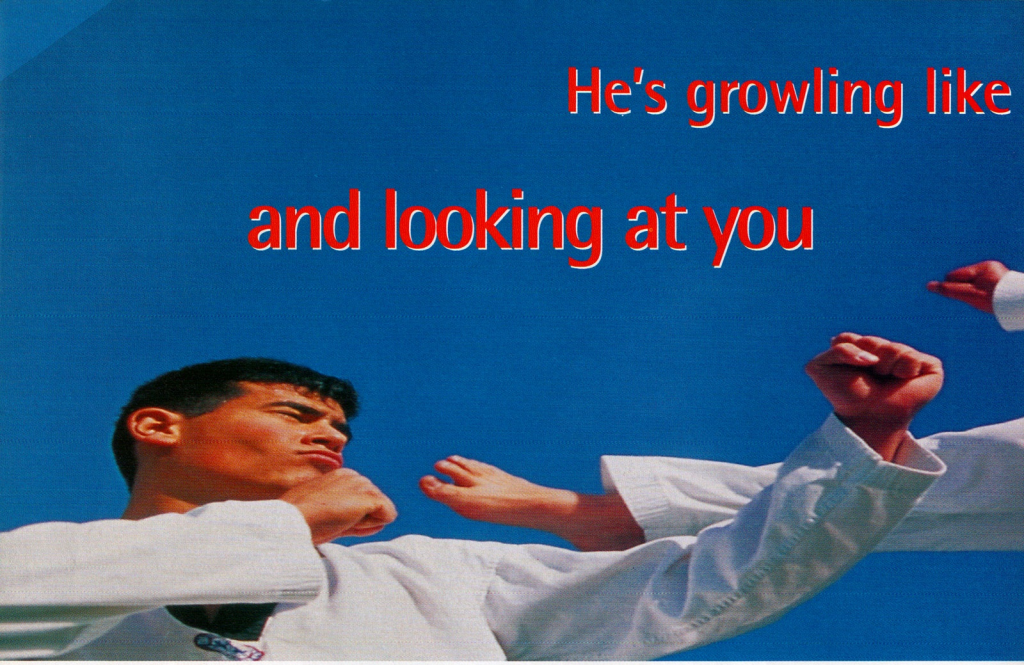
***Total NBA* promises to be the basketball sim by which all others are judged. From the early versions on display, this pledge may be true**





A successful slam dunk (top) causes a defender to fall in the chaos (above)

He's growling like and looking at you



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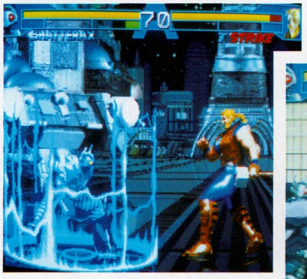
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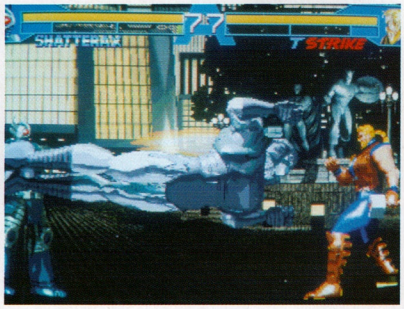
CD-ROM GAME

Marvel Comics Avengers in Galactic Storm

Format: **Arcade**
Publisher: **Data East**
Developer: **Data East**
Release Date: **January**
Origin: **Japan**

Using popular Marvel Comics characters, Data East hopes to find itself a stronghold in the growing and competitive 3D fighter market





The smooth polygonal characters look 3D but battle in a 2D arena with standard punch, kick, and special moves (above), including, the player's ability to call on the cameo appearance of another character (right)

Aside from its stellar graphic looks, the game's special moves and attacks really set it apart

Now that games like *Virtua Fighter 2* and *Battle Arena Toshinden*, have popularized 3D fighting games, it seems that 2D fighters have had their day. But a group of developers at the Japanese offices of Data East are trying to change all of that by using SGI rendered graphics, some slick new control tricks, and the extremely bankable Marvel Comics license.

The story is typical comic book fare, two of the oldest and most powerful races in the Marvel universe, the Kree and the Shi'ar are at war, and as usual, the Earth is mixed up in the whole mess.

Sporting a standard fighting mode and a Tournament-style play, enabling players to choose one of eight characters, including Captain America, Crystal, The Black Knight, and Thunderstrike — and if your tastes tend toward villainy, Shatterax, Korath, Dr. Minerva, and Supremor — the title also features a Storyline mode in which players select any four heroes in a *Final Fight*-style brawler.

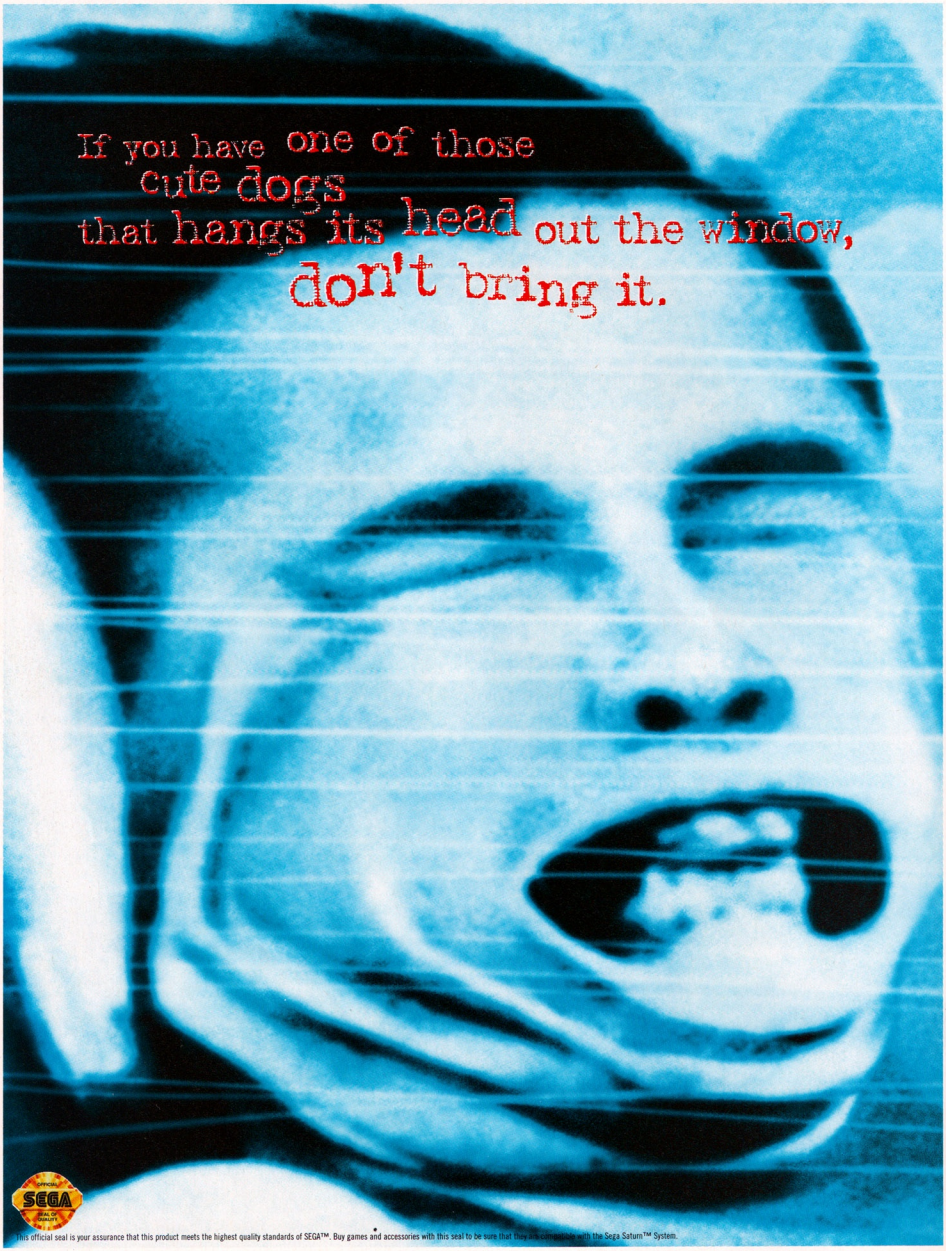
Aside from the stellar graphic look of the game, *Galactic Storm*'s innovative special moves and attacks are what really set it apart. Before starting the game, players can select one of eight "cameo" characters, including the Vision, Thor, Iron Man, and Ronan the Accuser, who will come in and fight against an opponent with a massive projectile attack or combo move.

Galactic Storm doesn't stray too far from the 2D fighter path, but its new features and technology show that the genre has still got a lot of kick. With 3D technology advancing just as quickly, there's a hard battle ahead for the next round of flat screen beat-em-ups. ng





Captain America's hard-hitting ram attack (inset). Ironman makes his cameo appearance



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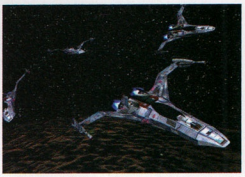
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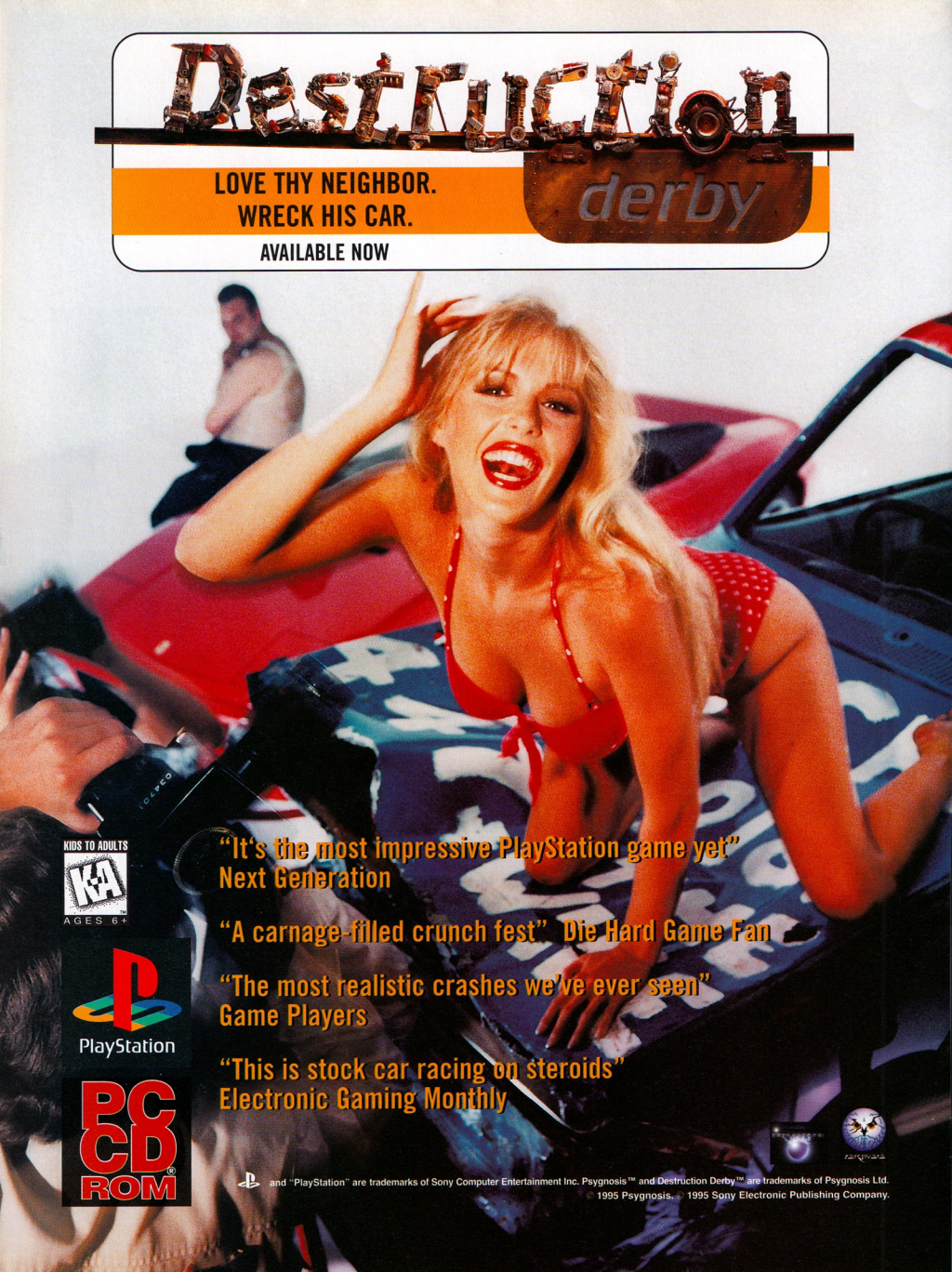
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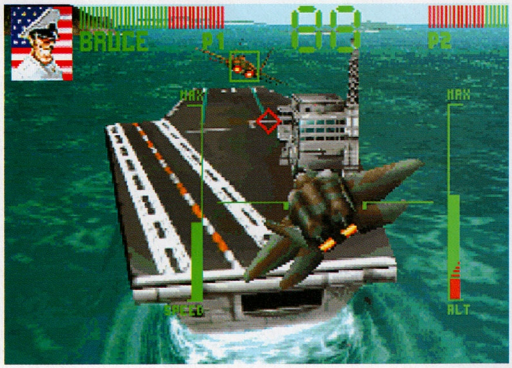
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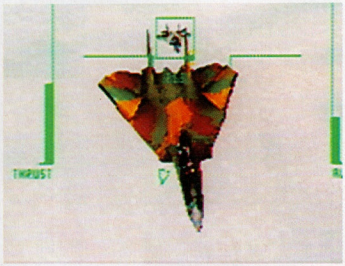

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Deadly Skies

JVC's salvo in the airplane shooter war features an intriguing new control mechanism — surprisingly borrowed from (gasp) the fighting genre

Format:	**PC, Saturn**
Publisher:	**JVC**
Developer:	**FunCom**
Release Date:	**spring**
Origin:	**Norway**







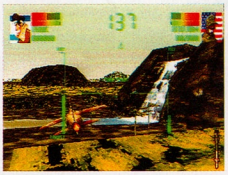
The graphics are very detailed, especially in the Second City stage. Note the helpful Heads Up Display (upper left)

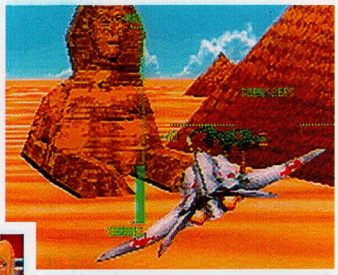
Thanks to the one-on-one dogfight style of combat, this game has a distinctly different feel than others in this sub-genre

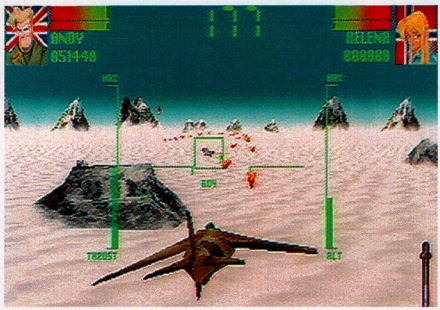
The 3D power of the next generation systems has ushered in an explosion of 3D games that feature arcade gameplay combined with flight-sim looks. Sega's *Wing Arms*, Namco's *Air Combat*, Virgin's *Agile Warrior*, and US Gold's *Thunderstrike 2* are among the 32-bit games in this sub-genre out now or soon to be released. *Deadly Skies* is JVC's addition to the genre, and it skews the equation even more in favor of the arcade, with the addition of a feature seen previously only in fighting games — special moves.

In fact, the whole game is basically a fighting game in the air, with planes instead of beefy bit-mapped or polygon brawlers. The game is set against the backdrop of an international UN "top gun" contest that pits the best eight pilots from across the globe against one other, and two instructors (bosses) to determine who is the best. The planes fly as you would expect, D-pad or joystick controlling direction, with buttons for standard things like machine guns (which, in the best

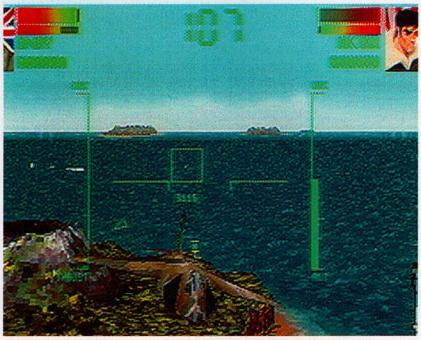
ng alphas







Note the fighting game-style status bars and character sketches in the corners of the screens; this game is truly a hybrid of genres

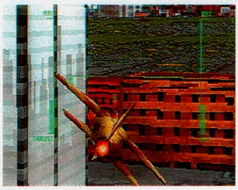


The control in an early version of the game without special moves was very smooth; it isn't clear how the addition of the moves will affect this

videogame tradition, are infinite) and your limited supply of missiles. What's unexpected are the special moves. At the top of the screen is a bar measuring your special move energy. At any time you can pull *Street Fighter*-like moves with your joystick to execute a special move. Some, like loops, rolls, and airbrakes are common to all pilots, and some, like 180° Quickturns, Immelmanns, Cloaking, "Fist of Fire," and others are unique to individual pilots. And of course, there are hidden moves waiting for you to discover.

At any time you can pull *Street Fighter*-like moves with your joystick to execute a special move

There are eight playable characters in the game, each with different stories, planes, and special moves. The planes all have different strengths and weaknesses as well. Combat takes place over seven stages: Canyon, which is strictly for training and practice; Desert, which is fairly flat; Jungle, which adds some terrain objects to be avoided; Ocean; Mountain; and Second City. The last two locales feature very tough terrain.



Some sequences look a lot like Atari's *Blue Lightning*, but with real 3D



The sheer variety of the scenery from stage to stage is impressive

Thanks to the one-on-one dogfight style of combat, this game has a distinctly different feel than the others in the sub-genre. Will the integration of fighting game-style control with 3D air combat be successful? That question will be answered in the marketplace, but JVC deserves credit for making an impressive effort to go beyond the status quo in arcade fighters. ng

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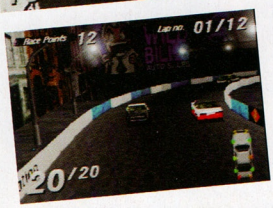


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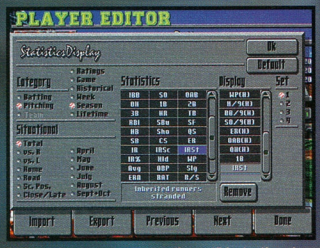
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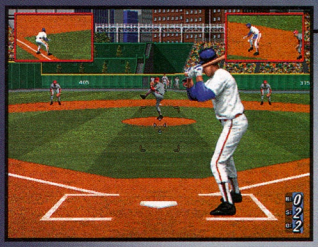
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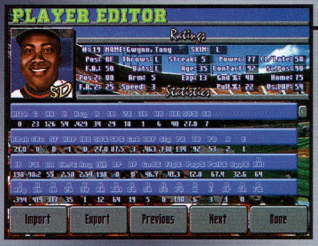
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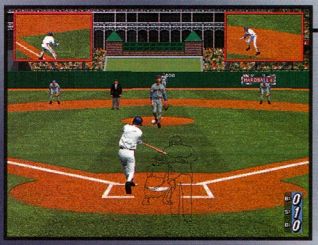
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The City of Lost Children

The art of French cinema, a great interface, and solid gameplay come together in this somewhat unusual title



Format:	**PC CD-ROM**
Publisher:	**Psygnosis**
Developer:	**Psygnosis**
Release Date:	**summer**
Origin:	**France**



Filled with dazzling graphics and lifelike 3D motion, the *City of Lost Children* portrays a world both bleak and beautiful. Miette, a precocious little girl (above) is the story's central character

It's pretty much standard practice for interactive entertainment companies to scarf up the videogame license to major action movies, but for perhaps the first time, a major game company is preparing a solid game release based on an intellectually sound film.



You're armed only with the strength of a little girl; in these situations, you must use brains instead of violence

In Psygnosis' new title *The City of Lost Children* (named after the movie), players enter a bizarre three-dimensional world through the eyes of Miette, a precocious little girl who is attempting to stop a fiendish man from stealing the dreams of local youths.

Told in classic French style, both the movie (which, as of yet, still unreleased) and the game blend a subtle story with a dark and twisted atmosphere to create an end product that is both enormously absorbing and strangely haunting.

Although the game is filled with clips from the film, the Psygnosis design team has utilized a fully interactive 3D interface to keep the title from breaking down into a passive, click-and-watch snooze-athon, so characteristic of most "interactive movies." The graphics are both crisp and entertaining, detailing scenes of both wonder and violence flawlessly.

Although still in its earliest stages, *The City of Lost Children* is definitely a game to watch for. The mixture of a nontraditional plot and intuitive gameplay could make this one of the most intriguing titles of 1996. ng





Although the storyline may sound childish, this title is aimed at a more adult audience



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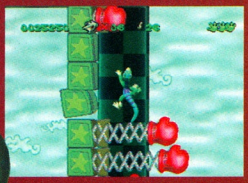
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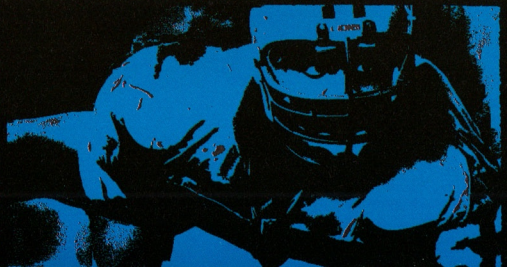


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Warhawk PlayStation **Twisted Metal** PlayStation **Goal Storm** PlayStation **Lost Eden** 3DO **Stonekeep** PC
Magic Carpet PC **Crusader: No Remorse** PC **I Have No Mouth** Mac **Toy Story** Genesis **Gargoyles** Genesis



Reviews — we did them *our* way

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Here's where you'll find full reviews on the very latest games for your favorite system. Starting this month we've changed the format of our reviews to give next generation games the extra space they deserve. To find out how our rating system works, check out the simple chart below.

★★★★★ **Revolutionary**
Brilliantly conceived and flawlessly executed; a new high-water mark.

★★★★ **Excellent**
A high-quality and inventive new game. Either a step forward for an existing genre, or a successful attempt at creating a new one.

★★★ **Good**
A solid and competitive example of an established game style.

★★ **Average**
Perhaps competent; certainly uninspired.

★ **Bad**
Crucially flawed in design or application.

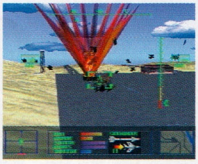
PlayStation

Agile Warrior
Publisher: Virgin
Developer: Black Ops

The title of this game is a little misleading. The F-111X "sim" is a craft that's anything but "agile," flying more like a penguin than an eagle. It's got nothing on *Warhawk*, and barely comes up to the likes of *Air Combat*. Sure, there's lots of eye-catching visuals, mainly consisting of really big explosions — hit a fuel depot and you'd almost swear you're using tactical nukes. It's also mildly interesting from a strategy standpoint because by triggering a really big blast you can destroy other enemies, including planes, with collateral damage.

However, *Agile Warrior* only includes a half dozen missions, most of which are more difficult than they should be, often simply because the plane itself handles so badly. Many details aren't well thought out either, like superimposing the mission map directly over the heads up display, covering most of the screen and giving the player the impression of spending half the game flying around in dense fog.

If you stick with it, there is some fun to be had, but not enough to overcome the game's many small and large frustrations.
Rating: ★★



If you like big explosions, *Agile Warrior* has 'em — but *Warhawk* may be a better all-around game

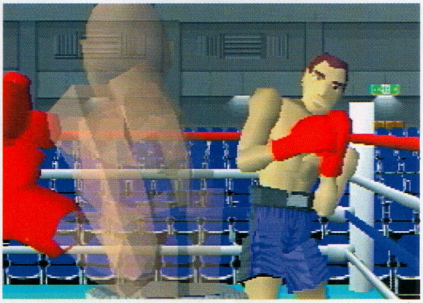
Boxer's Road
Publisher: New Corp (Japan)
Developer: New Corp

Boxer's Road isn't exactly a boxing game, it's nothing less than a boxing career simulator.

The level of detail is daunting, at least at first. Before even stepping into the ring, you have to work out a training schedule, down to exactly what your potential Golden Gloves champion is going to eat, keeping in mind such things as how your amino acid and glucose levels will affect the exercises you've chosen.

You then have to decide on the best path to the championship, and top fighters won't even touch you until you've moved up the rankings. It's an intriguing approach, and if the actual boxing itself had been handled better, it would be amazing. Unfortunately, it doesn't work out that way.

The matches are something of a letdown, being realistic to a fault, slow, and with sluggish control. The title shows an interesting effort, and with some tweaking it would make a fine US import. Until then, unless you can read a good deal of Japanese, you're out of luck.
Rating: ★★★



The boxing might be the worst thing about *Boxer's Road*, but oddly, it's still worth checking out. The actual building of your career is very detailed

Criticom
Publisher: Vic Tokai
Developer: Kronos

The hell of it is, we really wanted to like this one.

The programmers of *Criticom*, the latest entry in the ever-growing field of polygon brawlers, have made a valiant attempt to bring us a three-dimensional game with completely realistic light sourcing. And from a purely technical standpoint, they succeeded admirably. Every limb throws its own shadow, and on some backgrounds the lighting is very effective indeed. It's beautiful. But the compromise is that the game's look has been done at the expense of good gameplay. Combat churns along at a maddeningly choppy frame rate, and control suffers accordingly.

The eight character designs are clever and imaginative — Demonica, the cloven-hoofed demon woman, and Gorm, a scaly, muscle-bound guy are two standouts, though none of the others are far behind — but it doesn't help any that they're animated "by hand," rather than using some sort of motion-capture scheme. This gives them all a stiff, jerky movement, painful to watch and hard to follow.

The *Criticom* designers get a mark for trying to do something new, but they lost track of what the point of the whole thing should be — nice graphics in addition to good gameplay.
Rating: ★★



***Criticom* is gorgeous, as long as the characters aren't moving**

PlayStation

HEADER!



Goal Storm

Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, it's impossible to rate any serious soccer game without comparing it to *FIFA Soccer*, at least until something else sets the standard.

Goal Storm, the first title from Konami's sports division, would like to do just that, but comes just a hair shy of pushing *FIFA* off its perch. All World Cup teams are represented, and each team has the predictable strengths and weaknesses — in other words, novice players should choose Brazil and give Canada a good kicking while getting the hang of the play mechanics. The game looks excellent, with smooth if simply texture-mapped players. They're animated a bit sluggishly, perhaps, but the control is solid and relatively intuitive (although placing the defensive tackle and offensive goal shot on the same button wasn't the best idea — until you reach a certain level of proficiency, you wind up gaining possession only to kick it away). There's also a well-done, if repetitive play-by-play announcer, something that's becoming *de rigueur* in next gen sports titles.

On the whole, *Goal Storm* is slower and oddly less involving than *FIFA*, but only slightly, and it's easily the best soccer game for PlayStation — OK, it's the only one, but it's still going to be tough to beat.

Rating: ★★★★

If you squint a little, *Goal Storm* looks like a real soccer game. Players go nearly nuts after scoring a goal (right)

Cyberspeed

Publisher: Mindscape
Developer: Mindscape

Here's another racing game, and this time with a twist. Instead of simply racing on a track, these vehicles "hang" from a force beam, an energy clothesline the length of the track. Since going around a fast turn can pull you off the beam, instead of riding high in the curves you must stick to the inside, "pressing" the ship against the beam, while passing equates to swinging over opponents, rather than pulling out and around them.

Cyberspeed is different, and gimmicky — but it works, and every ship has a plasma weapon and a set of missiles, so combat is integral to the strategy. There's eight vehicles, all nice and glossy and different in look and feel. What's more, there's practically no draw-in — which isn't as impressive as it sounds, since the walls to the tracks are so high you can't see very far ahead anyway.

But not having the distraction is appreciated. It's not in the same league as *Wipeout*, but it's different and enjoyable in its own right.

Rating: ★★★



Strategy as well as skilled driving is intregal to *Cyberspeed*

Metal Jacket

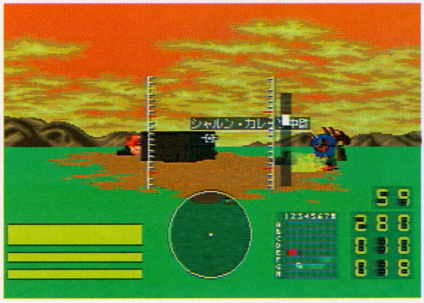
Publisher: Solan (Japan)
Developer: Pony Canyon

Offering some interesting options, like the ability to fight in snow and at different times of the day or night, *Metal Jacket* is another fighting robot Japanese release.

There's six kinds of terrain, from simple forests to more crowded cities, but the ground is always flat, with trees and buildings sticking out of it like Lego figures. The texture maps used on the backgrounds are rudimentary, but the 'mechs themselves — eight to choose from — are constructed from simple, flat-shaded polygons. This may have been done in the interest of making things move fast, but in this case, that may not have been such a good idea. The computer-controlled combatants are so speedy it's nearly impossible for a mere human to keep up.

Targeting and movement are confusing as well, which doesn't help, and the missions all appear to be search-and-destroy affairs. In other words, it's substandard however you look at it.

Rating: ★



Strategical options, like fighting at night, help to add depth, but less than amazing backgrounds and confusing gameplay make *Metal Jacket* mediocre

Viewpoint

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Visual Concepts

For the record, this was the most heralded shooter to ever hit the Neo-Geo. While it's true, the nearly 100% pre-rendered graphics look just great — the giant crab boss at the end of level two is especially noteworthy — and the techno soundtrack has a catchy, if languid, beat. However, this conversion is slowly paced, control is sluggish, and the difficulty level is off the scale, even on easy mode. It's one of those bizarre games almost deliberately designed as the antithesis of fun.

Most of the game consists of one nearly indestructible obstacle after the next, leaving the player negotiating through slamming gates and dozens of frenetic objects that slide, flip, and squirm around in your path, all with little chance of moving well enough to really avoid them.

We have no idea what kind of sadist converted this, but unless you're also an equally extreme masochist, give it a wide berth.

Rating: ★

PlayStation

STEELY

Twisted Metal
Publisher: Sony Interactive Entertainment
Developer: Single Trac

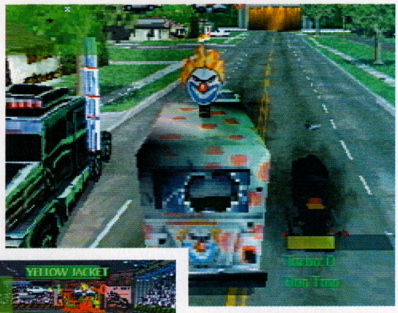
Another showcase title for the PlayStation, *Twisted Metal* gives you a choice between 12 different lethal vehicles, from a motorcycle to a semi-truck, and even a demonic ice-cream van from hell. Beginning one-on-one in an arena and spreading to combat in various urban and suburban landscapes, every vehicle sports a different range of weapons and special powers — some of which are a lot more useful than others — and it's a wild ride from start to finish.

In the interest of keeping the action as fast as possible, the texture maps have been kept simple, which means it doesn't look as good as, say, *Warhawk*, but most of the time the scenery whips by so fast you won't notice. There's enough pyrotechnics here to please the most jaded action fan, and the enemies are a fiendish, deadly lot.

The only problem (and here it comes again) is that the damn thing is too short. If you have any skill at all, you can get all the way to the final stage in about two hours. Granted, the final boss is all but impossible to defeat, but by then you've seen all the game has to offer.

However, in the end, the short running time is nearly redeemed by an excellent split-screen two-player mode, resulting in one-on-one combat that never gets old — it's so fast and stable it makes you wonder what went wrong with the two-player mode in *Cybersled*.

Rating: ★★★★





***Twisted Metal* comes loaded with action and humor, but very few levels. The "good"-humor ice-cream van, a drivable option with its own atypical weapons, moves extremely well despite its bulky size (top). Two vehicles blast away at each other; the vehicles heave while absorbing projectile attacks as would a real car (left)**

PlayStation

LITTLE GIANT

Warhawk
Publisher: Sony Interactive
Developer: Single Trac

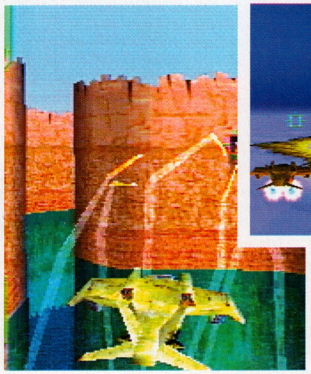
First introduced at the Electronic Entertainment Expo earlier this year, where bass-booming Thunderseats only added to incredible experience, this became the most anticipated PlayStation title of the '95 holiday season, and that with only the first two levels on display. Those first two levels are important, because they underscore what's good and bad about the final product.

Warhawk, an action/flight sim built around a futuristic VTOL aircraft, is almost everything we thought it would be — the high frame-rate, texture-mapped battlegrounds pull every conceivable special effect out of the PlayStation library: fog, plasma, reflective surfaces, and a startling surround-sound mix. The Warhawk craft itself is a heavy bird, but it handles well and before long you get the rhythm and begin blasting enemy positions like it's the most natural thing in the world.

The action is both exciting and challenging, and each of the game's six levels is completely unique and utterly gorgeous. It might easily rate five stars, but here we find its one big problem: there's only six levels. Most of the **NEXT Generation** staff was able to play through the complete game in just a few days, a shortcoming that seems to be dogging many early PlayStation releases: **NG** coverboy *Wipeout*, originally planned for 22 tracks, was released with just seven, and the excellent *Twisted Metal* fell short as well.

In the rush to release showcase titles by the holiday season, it seems that something has been sacrificed, and we can only hope for a bigger future.

Rating: ★★★★





***Warhawk*'s incredible graphics are a deliberate *tour-de-force* of the PlayStation's capabilities. No game looks much better than this one does**



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PlayStation

rating saturn

Saturn

Double Switch
Publisher: Digital Pictures
Developer: Digital Pictures

Appearing first on the Sega CD, *Double Switch*, a full-motion video mystery/action game, may be better described as an interactive movie than an actual videogame.

Starring such notables as teen star Corey Haim and rock diva Deborah Harry, there is a definite element of quality displayed in its high production value, and as a movie it may have been entertaining, but as an interactive game it's seriously lacking on several levels.

First and foremost, *Double Switch* ends up being unbearably repetitive as you work your way through the plot over and over again, trying to learn the correct moves that will enable you to progress in the game. There is also a considerably awkward interface to deal with, which makes actually experiencing the action of the game almost nil.

Finally, although the acting is decent and the sets top-notch, the video quality ends up not being that great, which may have been acceptable on the Sega CD, but it ends up being a big letdown on a 32-bit system like Saturn.

Rating: ★★



Teen star Corey Haim plays the leading role in Digital Picture's FMV mystery *Double Switch*

Quarterback Attack
Publisher: Digital Pictures
Developer: Digital Pictures

Sticking to its full-motion video guns through thick and thin, Digital Pictures has entered the 32-bit sports arena with *Quarterback Attack*, starring Mike Ditka as your coach. It's tempting to write this game off as another novelty FMV product, but when given the proper attention, this one might just surprise even the most die-hard of sports fans.

The game works by piecing together multiple video clips to simulate your actual success as quarterback. The interactive part of the game comes not only from choosing the plays, but also from using a cross-hair system to aim your passes. If you can manage to get the cross-hair in the right place at the right time, you're likely to complete a pass and thus move down the field. If your pass is not on target you will see a video clip that corresponds with where you threw the ball.



Though the video in *Quarterback Attack* doesn't look terrible, it's not up to par with the overall game design, which is unexpectedly good

The success of *Quarterback Attack* lies in the smooth cuts and fast-action which actually enhance the feeling of being in the game. It's unfortunate, however, that with all the video power of the Saturn, the video just doesn't look that good.

Rating: ★★★

SteamGear Mash
Publisher: Takara (Japan)
Developer: Takara

Employing all the elements of a side-scrolling shooting game, *SteamGear Mash* takes a tiny step forward in action gaming by adding three-dimensional play. But unfortunately that's where the innovation ends. Outside the 3D playing field, *SteamGear Mash* is little more than a shoot-em-up game with cute little characters and a puzzle-like atmosphere.

The fact that *SteamGear Mash* doesn't offer that much by way of innovation, however, doesn't necessarily mean that it's not any fun to play. With the constant bombardment of enemy fire, clever puzzle features, and occasionally sophisticated environments, this game can be enjoyable. There are, however, some control problems associated with the 3/4 perspective.

It's doubtful, in the end, with its cartoon-style graphics and brightly colored backgrounds, that this particular title will make much of an impact in the US.

Rating: ★★



A possible new direction for side-scrolling games, *SteamGear Mash* is an interesting experiment

Theme Park
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Bullfrog

In what is definitely one of the more bizarre game premises of all time, *Theme Park* is a simulation game based on the ownership and operation of a theme park. Debuting in PC format a few years ago, the game's simple interface and infectious gameplay make it a likely candidate for success on any 16- or 32-bit system.

In spite of the light-hearted premise, *Theme Park* is a serious sim game with realistic business fundamentals at its core. Aside from the management prowess you'll need to display, you will also do well to understand at least some facets of corporate finance or you're likely to find your beautiful theme park soon controlled by an outside interest.

Although the game has a certain simplistic charm that could easily be ruined by a few fancy graphics or sound bytes, it would have been nice to see *some sort* of update in the game's overall presentation. And so what's left, instead, is a near-perfect translation of the original, which certainly isn't bad, it's just not exciting.

Rating: ★★★

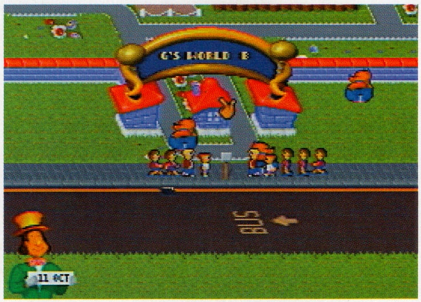
Wicked 18
Publisher: Vic Tokai
Developer: T & E Soft

By taking just a few liberties with the often stodgy game of golf, *Wicked 18* manages to breathe new life into this age-old sport.

Adding new challenges by way of unusual, unrealistic landscapes, this par-four course becomes more like an enormous putt-putt course, minus the clown heads. While this game may put off the serious golf player because of its lack of conventional boundaries, it's likely to find new fans with its playful approach.

Outside of the unusual terrain, *Wicked 18*'s gameplay is standard and whether this is your first video golf game or your 50th, you'll be putting the ball at least close to where you want it by the third or fourth hole. There are some problems with sluggish camera switching, but it doesn't hurt gameplay. In the end, if you're looking for a fresh approach to video golf this may be your only alternative, and it's a pretty good one.

Rating: ★★★



Though the cutesy graphics may indicate otherwise, Bullfrog's *Theme Park* is at times a serious and tricky business-management simulation

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3DO

Cannon Fodder
Publisher: Virgin
Developer: Krisalis

This notorious bloodfest is finally available for a home system other than Atari's Jaguar (where it was instantly catapulted to the hollow honor of "Best Jaguar Game of All Time"). Just think of *Syndicate* without all that annoying strategy and then you'll get the idea behind *Cannon Fodder*. Move a small squad of three to five soldiers across the battlefield, and shoot anything that moves and, yes, blow up anything that doesn't.

Of course, the high point of *Cannon Fodder* is that you aren't limited to shooting enemies just once — you can shoot them again and again, listening to their tiny screams as they bounce across the landscape.

Or, if you're lucky, you can just wing 'em, leaving them screaming on the ground until you finish them off. In addition to grenades and bazookas, in later levels you'll have a chance to steal other enemy hardware — tanks, helicopters, and those trademarked Skiddoo snowmobiles.

This title is fast paced, can be extremely challenging, and above all, is a seriously black-humored



Using action without any socially redeeming pretexts, *Cannon Fodder* can take on all comers

game, and no twisted individuals should be home without it.
Rating: ★★★★

Drug Wars
Publisher: American Laser Games
Developer: American Laser Games

OK fine. This time around, it's a drug cartel you get to bring your little plastic pistol to bear on. American Laser dug deep to find another icon — drug lords of nebulous south-of-the- border origins — to bear the brunt of socially acceptable, shoot-first-ask-questions-later style of justice.

By now you know the structure: four levels — this time they're a small town, a big city (Chicago), the border patrol, and finally, an assault on the kingpin's drug lab itself — each subdivided into four scenes. As we've come to expect, the full-motion video is slickly produced, but the screen res and frame rate are choppy, and ALM's overacting is still there. One final note, if you don't have a Game Gun, this is totally unplayable, as the on-screen cursor moves much too slowly to follow the action.

Strictly for lovers of indiscriminate action.
Rating: ★★



He's grinning now, but this drug lord from *Drug Wars* is about to wither under a hail of bullets

PC

Buried in Time: The Journeyman Project 2
Publisher: Sanctuary Woods
Developer: Presto Studios

Buried in Time is another graphic adventure that concentrates on spectacular graphics while compromising gameplay. That's too bad when you consider the title's intricate storyline.

First, the enticing graphics hinder the speed of play. Scene transitions can take several seconds on an average computer, and they're not much faster on a Pentium. And this wouldn't be so bad if it weren't for the fact that so many puzzles rely on your character looking in every possible direction at every step. But, the big trade off, however, is a beautiful looking game.

If you have a lot of patience, a love for difficult puzzles, and a taste for a well-written plotline, this is your game.
Rating: ★★★★



Although gameplay can be slow, the graphics in *Buried in Time* are beautiful and surrealistic

Capitalism
Publisher: Interactive Magic
Developer: Interactive Magic

Starting your own business is never easy. It certainly isn't any easier if you're trying to start your own business in *Capitalism*. This economic sim is far from simple,

3DO

YOU BET JURASSIC

Lost Eden
Publisher: Virgin Interactive
Developer: Cryo

This 3DO port of Cryo's PC CD-ROM game is noteworthy for many reasons. And for one, as graphic adventures go, this title is one of the most beautiful we've seen yet.

Rather than use an established setting — a space opera or an elf-strewn, Tolkienesque fantasy — Cryo developed a unique world of its own. It's tempting to point to the children's picture-book *Dinotopia* as a possible inspiration, but *Lost Eden* shows us a mythical time when humans and intelligent dinosaurs lived together. The pre-rendered scenery is gorgeous (and for once, unlike *Myst* and others, when you "walk" somewhere, it's possible just to get where you're going, speeding things appreciably), and the adventure is both large and involving. The music is also excellent: a strange and rather ethereal score which fits the mood perfectly.

However, the intriguing milieu doesn't do much to hide a few cliches: you're a prince who's out to stop an evil conqueror (this time an anthropomorphic Tyrannosaur), and the larger quest is broken down into smaller adventures to keep things moving. The interface, which uses a surprisingly large, rotating cube as a pointer, is interesting at first but gets obtrusive over time. The 3DO version retains the digitized speech, and the disk access time is noticeable but acceptable.

Overall, *Lost Eden* is well-constructed and different enough, especially among graphic adventures available for home systems, to warrant more than a look.
Rating: ★★★★



***Lost Eden*'s strongest element is its graphic design (top, middle). The adventure, on the other hand, is standard stuff — you've played it before (bottom)**

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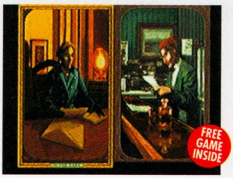
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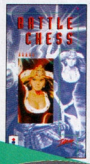




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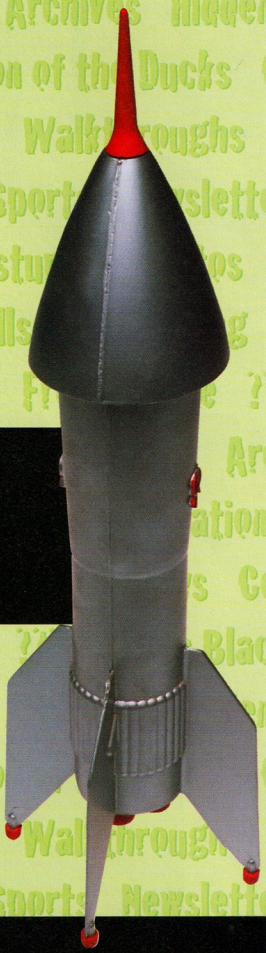
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***Capitalism* puts you in control of your own company. It's your job to make sure it grows and succeeds; and don't let the novel-sized manual scare you**

and by being so, it's incredibly realistic. Everything you could think of is here, from trading for goods to hiring employees.

The game is complex, but don't let the novel-sized manual fool you. It may be daunting at first, but this is one of those sims that you'll play for hours without even noticing.

Rating: ★★★★

FIFA '96 Virtual Stadium Soccer

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: EA Sports

With nicely animated players, killer commentary, and a variety of fun maneuvers to perform (when you can, that is — the infamous Pele bicycle kick is particularly difficult to manage), few soccer simulations can compare to *FIFA '96 Virtual Stadium Soccer*.

All major teams from around the world are represented, along with their current statistics. EA's Virtual Stadium technology enables you to look at the action from many angles, moving on the fly as needed.

Play control is simple, but the actual sport is still difficult to master. But then, real life soccer is just like that, too.

Rating: ★★★★



The multicamera angles enable you to watch the action from just about any perspective you like

Fury³

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Terminal Reality

It looks like *Terminal Velocity*. It plays like *Terminal Velocity*. But it's not *Terminal Velocity*. It's *Fury³*. You would think that a company who could create a revolution in PC operating systems would be able to create an original game to run under it. Instead, we get a game that's already been released under a different name. That's just some of the bad news.

Following that line of thought is that it's no improvement over *Terminal Velocity*, a mediocre game at best. The good news is *Fury³* runs under Windows 95 just fine.

So, if you're looking for a game to demonstrate your hot new operating system, miss this one.

Rating: ★



***Fury³* may run under Windows 95, but the it's a *Terminal Velocity* rerun and adds nothing new**

NHL Hockey '96

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: EA Sports

In its newest version of a great hockey game, EA Sports has gone above and beyond the call of duty. With factual stats, color pictures of players, and the names of players during the game, *NHL Hockey '96* delivers hockey playing to your PC in major true-to-life form.

The usual complaints are in the area of graphics, and unfortunately,

PC

BOULDER

Stonekeep

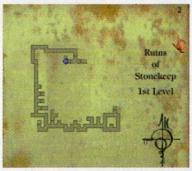
Publisher: Interplay
Developer: Interplay

It's been a long time coming, but the promised role-playing game *Stonekeep* has finally been released, and it's been well worth the wait. The graphics are stunning, the music is eerie, and the interface is a pleasure to use.

Virtually everything can be done with the arrow keys and the mouse. The only problem you may encounter is finger cramps from keeping your hand on only four keys for hours on end. The game takes place almost entirely in a dungeon atmosphere, and by using the helpful automap which enables notation taking, you can keep a journal that records what you've picked up and heard, as well as letting you take notes. Instead of concentrating on wandering through halls and killing monsters, puzzles must be solved before certain levels can even be reached. In many cases, puzzles span multiple levels of the dungeon, so you have to remember where you've been as well as where you're going.

The monsters are refreshingly original: They're either digitized actors with fantastic makeup, or painstakingly computer generated animation. If you've been waiting for this one to come out (like we have for the last two and half years), your patience has been well rewarded.

Rating: ★★★★★



You and two trusty friends, recruited along the way, face an undead skeleton (below)



Some of the computer-generated monsters look overwhelming. That chain sure doesn't look all that strong! (above)



rating pc

the SVGA mode is incredibly slow on even high-end 486s.

There's all kinds of special moves possible, from slapshots to checking an opponent while cruising down the ice. What more can you ask from any sports sim?

Rating: ★★★★



The only way to feel *NHL Hockey '96*'s skating action in full speed is to turn the graphics to low res

The Riddle of Master Lu

Publisher: Sanctuary Woods
Developer: Sanctuary Woods

Sanctuary Woods came through with its new graphic adventure *The Riddle of Master Lu*.

What makes this graphic adventure special is not only the storyline — which is excellent — but the graphics. Characters are digitized, moving across the screen with only minimal jerkiness and they even change size depending on how close the "camera" is to the action. The tasteful use of video and digitization gives the game a fully realistic feel, and characters have such personality that you begin to care about what happens to them.

The player interface, like many current graphic adventures, is one of the simplest, using only a few icons from which to choose.

All in all, we liked this game, and it may be one of the best graphic adventures this year.

Rating: ★★★★

SimIsle

Publisher: Maxis
Developer: Maxis

Once again Maxis has created a its specialty "sim," only this time the player controls the development of an island.

Your "agents" handle your dirty work while you keep track of what's going on. But because you have to memorize your employees' various skills (which can be somewhat of a bitch to do), the technique is not terribly efficient.

The artwork is great, and there are video scenes depicting certain places or actions that add to the atmosphere. But, ultimately, it's still the same as all other Maxis titles, just in a different setting. Only recommended for the true sim aficionado.

Rating: ★★

Werewolf vs. Comanche

Publisher: Nova Logic
Developer: Nova Logic

For pure multiplayer action, *Werewolf vs. Comanche* is hard to beat. Nova Logic cleverly designed the game for networking: fly the Comanche RAH-66 on one disc, or the Werewolf KA-50 on the other, each an entirely separate game.

Up to eight players can try to shoot each other down, and only four games need be bought. Controls are simple, and the action is nonstop. It could use a Super VGA mode, but all in all, this is one tidy package.

Rating: ★★★★

Wing Nuts

Publisher: Rocket Science
Developer: Rocket Science

This is a basic rail-type shooter — you're a pilot of a bi-plane, and you shoot down enemy planes when they appear — with humor making up for the lack of gameplay.

Like *Loadstar*'s cannon, bonus items provide strange powers, and if you've already flown a mission, the full-motion video intro is dubbed over with completely random satirical dialogue.

This game is not difficult or complex, but if you have a sense of humor, it's a lot of fun.

Rating: ★★★



***Wing Nuts*' biplanes are relatively easy to shoot down. Just keep those crosshairs centered on his tail, and he'll go down in ball of fire in no time**

PC

RUGGED

Magic Carpet 2

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Bullfrog

Bullfrog's original *Magic Carpet* will always be remembered for its innovative style and engaging gameplay. With *Magic Carpet 2*, the wonderfully creative development team managed to keep that same innovation, but really didn't change the game too much.

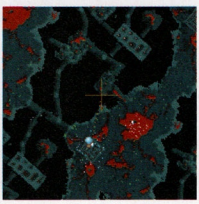
Magic Carpet 2 contains far more than its predecessor, mostly in terms of the interface. There is a much easier way to access your spells, and the world map will enable you to control your flight and battle creatures while you look at the larger map.

The levels, however, are turn-based. This is a change from the freedom of the first game, in which you had to simply kill monsters and accumulate mana. The goals give the game more depth, but ultimately you're doing just what you would be if the game didn't tell you what to do first.

With a souped-up engine and some more killer graphics, Bullfrog has really tried to make *Magic Carpet 2* surpass its award-winning predecessor. Unfortunately, it is still *Magic Carpet*, and even though some things work a bit differently, the gameplay is still exactly the same. So, if you loved the first *Magic Carpet*, this one is definitely for you.

Rating: ★★★★





Among the new creatures in *Magic Carpet 2* is this horned dragon. He's quick and powerful, but not really that tough to beat (far left). Looking at the world map shows you where things are in a grand scale. Thankfully, this time around you can still move about and fire while locating your next target (left)

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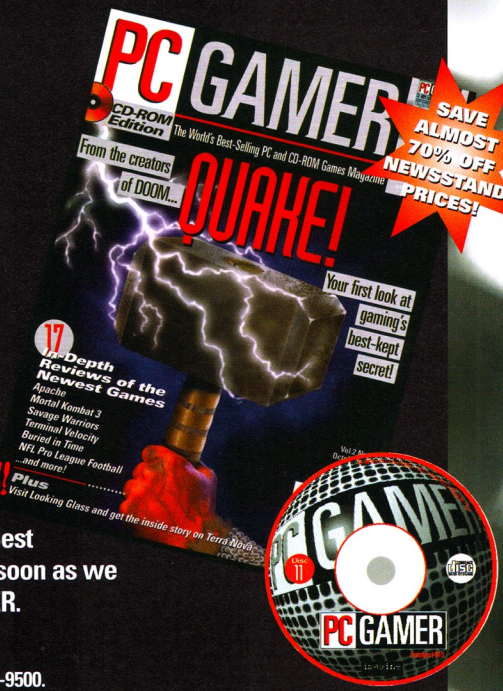
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PC

GRAIL CHASE

Crusader: No Remorse
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Origin

A mix between a graphic adventure and a shoot-first-and-ask-questions-later action game, *Crusader: No Remorse* has all the elements it takes to be an outstanding title: an original interface, killer graphics, spectacular sound, and, wait-for-them video cut-scenes.

The story? You're a "Silencer," part of an elite task force, and you're sent into enemy headquarters to complete mission objectives for the good guys. All you really need to know is that the fun is in the action — and there's a lot of it in this one. There are puzzles — of the "throw that switch to trigger this door" variety — and many enemies to shoot.

One of the few places *Crusader* falls short is in play control. The character has an alarming tendency to jump from one place to another at awkward moments. But that is a small dent in an otherwise fun game.

With the breath of fresh air *Crusader* gives the action/adventure genre, it's easy to forgive the cheesy acting that seems to be a trademark of full-motion video. Despite this minor failing though, this game has far more going for it than against it.

Rating: ★★★★★



This disheveled woman has been a prisoner of the WEC too long (inset). The graphically appealing rebel colony is your operations base (right)



Macintosh

Voyeur
Publisher: Interplay
Developer: Interplay
If you must spend your gametime watching clip after clip of full-motion video, the acting should at least be tolerable and interesting, and so on that score *Voyeur* is high-quality. As a snooping, videotaping, telephoto-using nark spying on the many windows of presidential hopeful Reed Hawke's imposing estate, you try to get the dirt on Hawke's activities before the family members and peers opposing him are offed...or before he comes leader of the most powerful nation on Earth.

There's little action here (after all, a voyeur is someone who likes to watch, not participate); so if this is you, *Voyeur* is the best such effort currently available.
Rating: ★★



***Voyeur*'s best aspects aren't interactive, but you can watch...**

3-D Ultra Pinball
Publisher: Sierra
Developer: Sierra
There is some substance to the argument that pinball is not a game meant for the monitor, but *3-D Ultra Pinball* works, and it works very well.

The cool perk here is that there are some things you simply can't do on a real, physical pinball machine: morphing table elements, minor pyrotechnic displays, realtime play aids, and subtle mutilations of physics.

This is a weird game, but it's smooth, true to the pinball spirit, and has all the eye-appeal of the real thing and more.
Rating: ★★

You Don't Know Jack
Publisher: Berkeley Systems
Developer: Jellyvision
You Don't Know Jack's real purpose is as a party game — a way of using the screen to bring people together, not push them into separate, dark, smelly rooms.

The game's sarcastic, straight-faced approach pits one to three players in a virtual game show, hosted by a wise-cracking MC, and poses players questions which are rooted in pre- and post-Generation X pop culture. The fastest hand on the buzzer gets a chance to answer the question, or forces a competitor to answer a real toughie.

An excellent, hip piece of work that may well prove to friends and associates that *You Don't Know Jack*.
Rating: ★★★



***You don't know Jack*'s Gibberish Question makes you rely on rhythm and your gut**



Though there is substance to the argument that pinball isn't meant for the monitor, each *3-D Ultra Pinball* table features complex, multiple-play arenas

Macintosh

MUTE

I Have No Mouth And I Must Scream
Publisher: Cyberdreams, Inc.
Developer: Cyberdreams, Inc.
Author Harlan Ellison has collaborated with Cyberdreams Interactive on a disturbing and (surprise) controversial game, based on his famous 1967 short story of the same title: "I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream."

The game (sporting a Sierra-style interface) chronicles the lives of the last five people on Earth — trapped in the subterranean belly of AM, an insane, humanity-hating supercomputer which intends to keep the five alive in a never-ending hell. Easing down a little from his original statement that he wanted a game "you cannot possibly win," Ellison scripted a surreal game concerned with ethics, humanity, and inner demons.

Five different story "tracks" delve into the inner secrets of these five damned souls. The moderate amount of gameplay features visual puns, psychological/ethical dilemmas (with such issues as courage, forgiveness, insanity, rape, and the Holocaust) which must be solved to outwit AM, and the voice of Ellison himself as the computer.

I Have No Mouth And I Must Scream is less a game than an ethical obstacle course, and will almost certainly get Cyberdreams into some kind of trouble with parents' groups.
Rating: ★★★





After this lovely, warm slice of pepperoni pizza was pulled from some poor victim's chest, you get to contemplate it... (inset). Luckily, the simple interface makes gameplay the challenge

Genesis

Quarterback Club '96
Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Iguana
Quarterback Club '96 is, in essence, your average football game. Not brilliant, not bad.

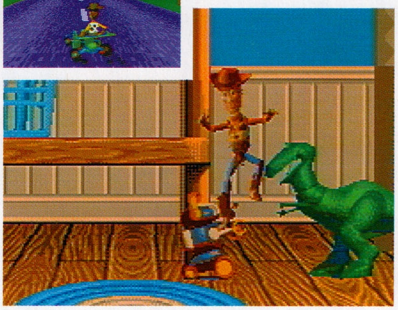
The title does have, however, at least one feature that should be in all future football games. When the quarterback drops back to pass, he doesn't have to keep running backward, he can actually settle in the pocket until a receiver is open. This year's update fortunately includes the NFL Players License, so all NFL players are there.

All in all though, the graphics and gameplay are simply average.
Rating: ★★★

Sega Genesis



RENDERED



Toy Story

Publisher: Disney Interactive
Developer: Traveller's Tales

This game may be geared to a younger audience, but it's hard to ignore its technological achievements. *Toy Story*, with its rendered 3D look, rather amazingly runs on a Genesis. It's the *Donkey Kong Country* of Sega's 16-bit console, showing that almost anything possible on the Super Nintendo is possible on the Genesis .

The game is based on the Disney movie of the same name and even though it's only side-scrolling, it's damn fun. Levels like coordinating the army men to help you return the baby monitor is just one example of some original gameplay that makes *Toy Story* one of the better Genesis games of the year.

This game looks and plays better than *Clockwork Knight* for the Saturn and that gives definite hope for Disney's future work.

Rating: ★★★★

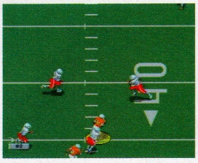
Although the game looks like it's just for kids, its really fun to play for adults, too (inset). Amazing graphics make all of the toys come to life; even this T-Rex looks awesome (left)



rating genesis super nes

College Football National Championship II
Publisher: Sega
Developer: Sega Sports
Last year's *CFNC* was undoubtedly the national champ of college football games, and this year's update is more of the same. The way the camera zooms in close for runs or passes is smooth and it greatly enhances the gameplay.

Still EA's *College Football USA* and its 107 division IA teams have evened things up this year.
Rating: ★★★★



When the camera zooms in close you get a chance to see some real nice graphics in *CFNC II*

VR Troopers
Publisher: Sega
Developer: Saban Entertainment
Trying to cash in on the *Power Rangers*' success, *VR Troopers* is a campy childrens' show and everyone knows what great games those make, right? Well, this game is exceptionally generic with some real simplistic fighting (good for kids, though) and nothing that makes it worth owning unless you're a huge fan of the show.
Rating: ★



Yes, the Power Rangers, ooops, *VR Troopers* are now on your video console as well as your TV

Super NES

Breath of Fire 2
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom
Capcom's follow-up to the modestly successful *Breath of Fire* (released in the US by SquareSoft) is larger and more involved than its predecessor, but unfortunately also much less interesting.

While some parts are very clever (you are able to build your home town, populating it with stray homeless folks you run across), it suffers from too little direction, a purely mechanical storyline, and the clunkiest dialogue since *Night Trap*.
Rating: ★★★

Sega Genesis

STATUESQUE

Gargoyles
Publisher: Disney Interactive
Developer: Beauna Vista
This game is easily one of the biggest surprises of the year. From out of nowhere (well, sorta), Disney Interactive has made one of the best Genesis games of the year.

The graphics are simply amazing, and gameplay elements, like busting through week walls, smashing through glass, and climbing on walls make *Gargoyles* a real treat to play. It's very similar in looks to Capcom's *Demon Crest* for the Super NES, but the SGI-rendered treatment and focus on gameplay makes *Gargoyles* a much better experience.

With this and *Toy Story*, Disney has done more with the Genesis than Sega has ever done.
Rating: ★★★★





The graphics are hauntily nice, and the gameplay in *Gargoyles* matches up (top). Smashing through walls and glass is a nice element to gameplay which frees up the exploring factor of the game; *Gargoyles* is reminiscent of *Demon's Crest* for the Super NES (right)

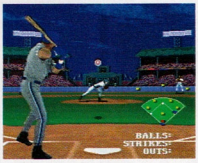
FIFA International Soccer
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Electronic Arts
If the history of sports videogames tells us anything for certain, it's that making a good soccer game is easy. But making a great one is a completely different story.

FIFA International Soccer for the Super NES is a great game. With its extremely fast action, sharp graphics, and sensible gameplay, this title is a winner.
Rating: ★★★★



Detailed graphics and realistic gameplay make *FIFAIS* the soccer game to beat on the Super NES

Frank Thomas' Big Hurt Baseball
Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Iguana Entertainment
Combining simulation aspects with a traditional baseball game, *Frank Thomas' Big Hurt Baseball* shows signs of innovative but flawed thinking. Most of the simulation aspects are in the pitching, which quickly becomes a tiresome chore. The rest of the game is a sub-par replica of several other baseball titles.
Rating: ★★



With weak graphics and gameplay, *Frank Thomas' Big Hurt Baseball* remains generic

International Super Star Soccer
Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami
Providing fast action, a reasonably good commentator and



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CD Rom

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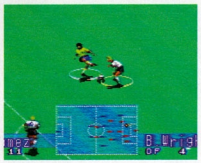
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pretty good graphics, *International Super Star Soccer* is a solid effort if not exactly special. One particularly nice feature is the inclusion of several different leagues and teams. Overall, this particular stab at the Soccer genre is slightly above average, but not by much.
Rating: ★★★



With its realistic soccer action, *International Super Star Soccer* is a strong new soccer title

NBA Give 'N Go
Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami
Making its debut in the arcades, *NBA Give 'N Go* is a fast-paced basketball game with real NBA



Recognizing real NBA players becomes an exciting part of the action in *NBA Give 'N Go*

teams and players. Perhaps the most exciting aspects of the game are the smooth animation and impressive graphics which are actually good enough, at times, to recognize real players.

There is a certain unpredictable nature to the controls which makes for some frustrating moments, especially on defense, but for the most part it's a good basketball game, especially for a system not known for its sports titles.

If you liked the arcade version, you're likely to be happy with the Super NES version, but don't expect perfection.
Rating: ★★★

Scooby Doo Mystery
Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Argonaut Software
Aimed at a younger audience, *Scooby Doo Mystery* is a good choice for a first-time graphic adventure experience. Although there are some serious problems in the awkward interface, the game does well to capture the essence of the animated series through its use of humor, mystery, and the overall look.
Rating: ★★★



Capturing the look and feel of the series, *Scooby Doo Mystery* is like a trip down memory lane

Separation Anxiety
Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Software Creations
Serving as a sequel to Acclaim's first Spider-Man title, *Total Carnage*, *Separation Anxiety* does nothing to further the cause of the side-scrolling action game.

Outside of the relatively good graphics and mindlessly satisfying action, there is nothing really worth noting, as there is nothing here that's not already been done several times over before.
Rating: ★★

Spawn
Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Acclaim
Based on a popular comic-book character, *Spawn* is such an obvious attempt to capitalize on name recognition that you'll be insulted just upon seeing it.

Suffering from problems with just about everything, a lack of speed, poor play control, and lousy graphics, this completely generic attempt at a videogame is less enjoyable than a skin rash. Avoid it at all costs!
Rating: ★

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KOF 95. Pulstar. Sonic Wings. Samurai Shodown 3

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Mystery Word Grid

	H					
		E				
P	I	N	C	H	W	MYSTERY WORD
	R					
S						

WORD LIST and LETTER CODE chart

PINCH .....W	PRESS.....K	BLAST .....A	WRECK .....D
BREAK .....Z	PUNCH .....S	SPRAY C	TURBO.....V
STOMP .....T	STAND.....R	PRESS .....E	DREAM ....O
CRUSH.....I	SCORE .....H	SLANT L	CHASE.....P

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Arcade

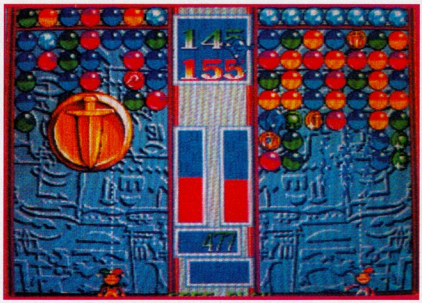
Chain Reaction
Publisher: Data East
Developer: Russ Ltd.

Pretend you're playing *Tetris*, except the shapes you move pile up at the top of the screen, and are controlled from the bottom. Now imagine you're a silly, jingling jester, and until you get serious and eliminate these shapes from falling, they'll crush you in a wall of horror. Now you're ready to play Data East's new game.

Chain Reaction is proving quite popular in Japan, despite the fact that this kind of game has been around now for at least five years. The difference here is the player grabs as many of the same kind of paganistic shapes — moons, suns, stars, clouds (pink hearts, green clovers...) — and moves them to delete a column. Special shapes help you to eliminate entire blocks when lined up three in a row; all of this, of course, happens against a timer.

It's not brilliant nor innovative, certainly not new, but it's fun and as addictive as sex after lunch... in a jester suit.

Rating: ★★



***Chain Reaction* is fun in a familiar way: You control the shapes from the bottom, not the top, and can move them at will from one column to another**

Hoops
Publisher: Data East
Developer: Data East

The lineage of the basketball revolution, from Dr. J's flying dunks to Michael Jordan's in-your-face slams, has pumped up the image of basketball to amazing proportions, and videogame developers, never slow to surf the latest trends, are making titles to catch the wave.

Hoops pits 12 different international three-man teams against each other for the world title. Your three buttons control every move from blocking and stealing to rebounding and shooting, as well as your choice of player control: But real adrenaline rushes come from super three-point shots and power slams which, as you accrue power through consistent shooting (displayed in a power meter) can make the fattest, uncoordinated Anyman into a super-agile, all-around great Magic Johnson.

Blocky simplistic graphics and colorful but cheap-looking backgrounds won't attract gamers to this one, but when you get the chance to play, especially with a couple friends, you can have some challenging fun.

Rating: ★★★

Miner's Revenge
Publisher: Lazer-Tron
Developer: Lazer-Tron

And we thought shooters couldn't get any simpler. With videogames like *Miner's Revenge*, laser-gun shooters like *Zombie Raid* are deep, dark, complex, even metaphysical in comparison.

Miner's Revenge enables two players to blast away at goobery cereal box Lucky Charm blobs (aka ghosts), as you seemingly tumble down a prerendered, polygonal, abandoned coal mine. Shoot at the same trio of smiling, dopey blobs gyrating across the screen and get points each level, the difference being the goofy trio moves faster each level; bonus power-ups zip around as well helping to increase your score.

You can't reload, you don't control the cart, each level is nearly identical, and you could easily drop your gun, walk away, and forget this game ever existed. There's more interaction in watching a Saturday morning cartoon than in this dud.

Rating: ★

Sport Fishing 2
Publisher: Sega
Developer: Ryobi

The last place you'd think of going fishing is in the arcade. There's no beer, no sun, (no babes), no fresh water tingling your skin. And yet, *Sport Fishing 2* touches deep into your primal, yes primal, fishing urge.

Based entirely on video, *Sport Fishing 2* enables you to control a deep-sea fishing rod to reel in the Big Cahuna. You handle a fishing rod and line which provides the feeling of the tugs and pulls of snagging a desperate fish. Your job is simply to pull that puppy in just right; with the right lure (four choices), and by choosing the perfect spot (16 locales), you may get lucky. But despite catching as many fish as possible in the time limit, you may catch a school of unsightly catfish.

And like the unlucky soul we saw playing the game, when one out of two catches is a chunk of driftwood, you may bring that primal urge to a cool fighting or driving game instead of going fishing in FMV.

Rating: ★★★

SORRY!

No new games were made available for review this month on the following systems

- Jaguar
- Virtual Boy
- 32X
- Neo-Geo
- Sega CD

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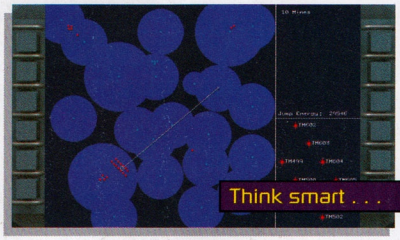
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32-bit gamer's guide

The best of 1995's 32-bit games reviewed and rated

The second impressive wave of 32-bit games have hit the shelves and **NEXT Generation** is making sure all readers have a clear idea of what's good, and what's not. Below is our regular monthly reviews reference guide to every 32-bit (and Jaguar) game released. Unfortunately, there isn't enough space to include PC or Mac games.

Where a game name is accompanied by the suffix (Japan), it means the game (at press time) is only available as a grey import from Japan. These games will not work on US machines unless equipped with an adapter cartridge, such as the Datel Universal Adapter (contact Tommo at (818) 839-8755).

Title	Publisher	NG Rating
PlayStation		
A Train	SCE	★★★
Aquanaut's Holiday (Japan)	ArtDink	★★★★
Arc The Lad (Japan)	SCE	★★★★
Cosmic Race (Japan)	Neorex	★
Crime Crackers (Japan)	Sony Entertainment	★★
Cyber War (Japan)	Coco Nuts	★★
CyberSled	Namco	★★
Defcon 5	Data East	★★★★
Destruction Derby	Psygnosis	★★★★
Dragon Ball Z (Japan)	Bandai	★★
Gunner's Heaven (Japan)	Media Vision	★★★★
Jumping Flash! (Japan)	SCE	★★★★★
Kileak The DNA'	SME	★★★
King's Field (Japan)	From Software Inc.	★★
Mobile Suit Gundam (Japan)	Bandai	★★
Mortal Kombat 3	Publisher	★★★
Motor Toon GP (Japan)	SCE	★★
NBA Jam TE	Acclaim	★★★★
PGA tour Invitational '96	Electronic Arts	★★★
Philosoma (Japan)	SCE	★★
Power Serve 3-D Tennis	Ocean	★★★
Power Baseball (Japan)	Konami	★
Raiden	Seibu	★★
Rayman	UbiSoft	★★★★
Ridge Racer	Namco	★★★★
Tekken	Namco	★★★★
Battle Arena Toshinden	SCE	★★★★
Total Eclipse Turbo	Crystal Dynamics	★★
Winning Eleven (Japan)	Konami	★★★★
WipeOut	Psygnosis	★★★★★
WWF Wrestlemania	Acclaim	★★★★
Zero Divide	Zoom	★★★
Saturn		
Astal	Sega	★★★
Battle Monster (Japan)	Naxat Soft	★★
Blackfire	Sega	★★★
Bug!	Sega	★★★
Clockwork Knight	Sega	★★★
Clockwork Knight 2 (Japan)	Sega	★★★
Dark Legends (Japan)	Data East	★★
Daytona USA	Sega	★★★★
Deadalus (Japan)	Sega	★★★
Gotha (Japan)	Sega	★★★
Gran Chaser (Japan)	Sega	★★★
Last Gladiators (Japan)	Kaze Co	★★★★
Mansion of Hidden Souls	Sega	★★★
Myst	SunSoft	★★★
NHL All-Star Hockey '96	Sega	★★
Off-World Interceptor	Crystal Dynamics	★★★
Panzer Dragoon	Sega	★★★★
Pebble Beach Golf Links	Sega	★★★
Riglord Saga (Japan)	Sega	★★★
Shinobi Legions (Japan)	Sega	★★★
SimCity	Maxis	★★★
Street Fighter: The Movie	Acclaim	★★★
Tama (Japan)	Tengen	★★
Virtua Fighter	Sega	★★★★
Virtua Fighter Remix	Sega	★★★★★
Virtua Racing	Time Warner	★★★
Virtual Hydlide	Atlus	★★
Virtual Volleyball (Japan)	Imagineer	★
World Series Baseball	Sega	★★★★
Worldwide Soccer	Sega	★★★
3DO		
Alone In The Dark 2	Interplay	★★★★
Bladeforce	Studio 3DO	★★★★★
Burning Soldier	Panasonic	★★
Crime Patrol	American Laser Games	★★
D	Panasonic	★★
Demolition Man	Virgin	★★
Family Feud	GameTek	★★★
Flying Nightmares	Domark	★★★
FIFA International Soccer	EA	★★★★★
Flashback	U.S. Gold	★★★
Gex	Crystal Dynamics	★★★★
Ghost Hunter	Matsushita	★★★
Guardian War	Panasonic	★★★
Hell: a Cyberpunk Thriller	GameTek	★★
Icebreaker	Magnet Interactive	★★★
Immercenary	EA	★★★
Iron Angel of the Apocalypse	Panasonic	★★★
Jammit	Street Sports	★★
John Madden Football	EA	★★★★
Killing Time	Studio 3DO	★★★★
Kingdom: The Far Reaches	Interplay	★★
Lemmings	Psygnosis	★★★★
Mazer	American Laser Games	★
Mega Race	Mindscape	★★
Microcosm	T&E Soft	★★
Myst	Panasonic	★★
Off-World Interceptor	Crystal Dynamics	★★★
Panzer General	SSI	★★★★
Quarantine	GameTek	★★★
Rebel Assault	Lucas Arts	★★
Need for Speed	EA	★★
Road Rash	EA	★★★★
Samurai Shodown	Crystal Dynamics	★★★
Seal of the Pharaoh	Panasonic	★★
Shanghai: The Great Wall	Activision	★★★
Shock Wave	EA	★★
Opration Jump Gate	EA	★★★
Slam 'N' Jam '95	Crystal Dynamics	★★★★
Soccer Kid	3DO	★★
Space Hulk	EA	★★★★
Space Pirates	American Laser Games	★★★
Star Control II	Crystal Dynamics	★★★
Starblade	Panasonic	★★
Station Invasion	Club 3DO	★★★
Super Street Fighter II Turbo	Panasonic	★★★★
Super Wing Commander	Origin	★★★★
Supreme Warrior	Digital Pictures	★★
Syndicate	EA	★★★★
The Daedalus Encounter	Panasonic	★★★
Theme Park	EA	★★
Trip'D	Wrap	★★★
VR Stalker	American Laser Games	★★★
Way of the Warrior	Universal Interactive	★★
Wing Commander III	EA	★★★★★
Wolfenstein 3-D	Id/Logicware	★★
World Cup Golf	US Gold	★★
Zhadnost: The People's Party	Studio 3DO	★★★
Jaguar		
Aircar	Midnite	★★★
Alien vs. Predator	Atari	★★★★
Blue Lightning CD	Atari	★★★
Bubsy: Fractured Furry Tales	Atari	★★
Burn Out	Atari	★★★
Cannon Fodder	Virgin Interactive	★★★★
Checkered Flag	Atari	★★
Club Drive	Atari	★
Doom	Atari	★★★
Double Dragon V	Tradewest	★★
Dragon	Atari	★★★
Fight for Life	Atari	★★
FlipOut!	Atari	★★★
Highlander	Atari	★★★
Hover Strike	Atari	★★
Iron Soldier	Atari	★★★
Pitfall: The Mayan Adventures	Atari	★★★★
Power Drive Rally	Time Warner	★★★
Rayman	Atari	★★★★
Syndicate	Ocean	★★★★
Tempest 2000	Atari	★★★★
Theme Park	Ocean	★★
Troy Aikman Football	Williams	★★
Val d'Isere Skiing	Atari	★★
White Men Can't Jump	Trimark	★★★
Wolfenstein 3-D	Atari	★★
Zool 2	Atari	★★★
32X		
Brutal	Gametek	★★★
Cosmic Carnage	Sega	★
Fahrenheit	Sega	★★
Knuckles Chaotix	Sega	★★
Metal Head	Sega	★★
Mortal Kombat II	Acclaim	★★★
Motocross Championship	Sega	★★★
NBA Jam Tournament Edition	Acclaim	★★★
Night Trap	Digital Pictures	★
Pitfall: The Mayan Adventures	Activision	★★★
Quarterback Club	Acclaim	★★★
RBI '95	Time Warner	★★
Shadow Squadron	Sega	★★★
Slam City with Scottie Pippen	Digital Pictures	★★
Star Wars Arcade	Sega	★★★
Super Afterburner	Sega	★★★
Super Space Harrier	Sega	★★★
Tempo	Sega	★★
Virtua Fighter	Sega	★★★★
Virtua Racing Deluxe	Sega	★★★
World Series Baseball	Sega	★★★★★
WWF Raw	Acclaim	★★
Zaxxon's Motherbase 2000	Sega	★
36 Great Holes	Sega	★★★

For your information

Here's what the ratings signify:

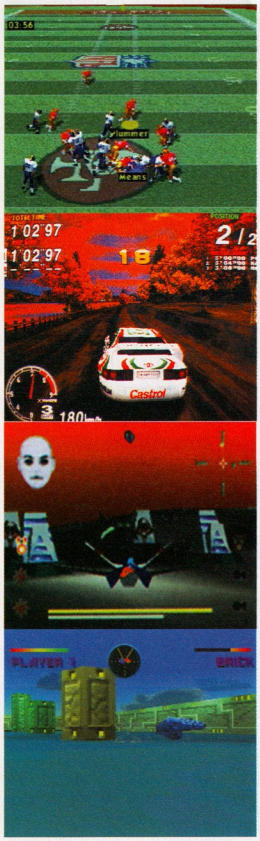
★★★★★ Revolutionary
★★★★ Excellent
★★★ Good
★★ Average
★ Bad

NG Picks for

Once again **NEXT Generation** brings you a list of the very best titles available for each of the major home entertainment systems as tested and rated by the experts. When you're looking for the latest information on the best titles of today and tomorrow, turn to the pages of **NEXT Generation**, and when you're looking to find the hottest games in a friendly atmosphere, be sure to head to the Electronics Boutique nearest you.

Jan. '96

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PlayStation

NFL Game Day (Sony) — The first big name to launch in what will be this year's battle of the gridiron games, *NFL Game Day* has graphics, sound, and playability that far outweigh anything the 16-bit machines have to offer. Real teams, real player names, and challenging computer opponents make this one a must own for any sports fan.

Rating: ★★★★★

Saturn

Sega Rally (AM3) — Fast-paced action with a much more down-and-dirty feel than any of the high-performance racers we've seen before. In addition to some truly phenomenal high-speed visuals, *Sega Rally* also sports quick, responsive control, a split-screen two-player mode, and your choice of two regular and one hidden car in both manual and automatic modes. Driving at its best.

Rating: ★★★★★

Jaguar

Battlemorph (Atari) — A futuristic flight/battle game with ultra-smooth motion, *Battlemorph* is an impressive sequel to the original Jaguar pack-in, *Cybermorph*. Set in a 3D world filled with danger at every turn, this title offers some of the finest graphics, and action to date on the Jaguar. Add tons of puzzle-like levels to the constant blazing gunplay, and you've got a nicely rounded action game for the Jaguar.

Rating: ★★★★

3DO

Battlesport (Studio 3DO) — A strange mixture of a sports and arcade game, *Battlesport* is a high-speed action title that blends the best aspects of soccer with that of games like *CyberSled*. In each timed round, the players attempt to gather power-ups and put an electronic ball into their opponent's goal while stopping them from doing the same. Great gameplay, great graphics, and great fun.

Rating: ★★★★★

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PC

Crusader: No Remorse (Origin) — One of the most innovative action titles since *Syndicate*, *Crusader* features polished bit-map characters, fast animation routines, and super challenging puzzles. The realistic interaction with your game world, from shattering glass to screaming enemies adds to the dark atmosphere of the title. If you're looking for PC action, this is the game for you.
Rating: ★★★★★

Genesis

Vectorman (Blue Sky) — One of Sega's last great Genesis titles, *Vectorman* is typical of most products released at the end of a platform's life-cycle — it exploits the Genesis technology to the max, resulting in an *Earthworm Jim*-style side-scroller with plenty of fast action and shooting gameplay. *Vectorman* himself is a fairly interesting character, a disconnected series of balls with the ability to morph into a variety of objects. A solid hit.
Rating: ★★★★

Super NES

Yoshi's Island (Nintendo) — The first *Mario World* adventure in five years, this game is another Shigeru Miyamoto classic. You play the dinosaur from *Super Mario World* who must ferry a baby Mario on his back across an impressive array of fantastic worlds, all the while hunting power-ups and (of course) coins. While not as deep as *Super Mario World*, this adventure is still classic Nintendo style.
Rating: ★★★★

Platinum Pick

Virtua Fighter 2 (Saturn, Sega AM2) — The ultimate arcade translation, *Virtua Fighter 2* has all of the smooth-scrolling action of the first installment with a score of additional moves and backgrounds along with two new characters. Crisp movement, bit-mapped polygon characters, and ultra-fast response also add to the game's fantastic appeal. Simply put, the best fighting game ever.
Rating: ★★★★★

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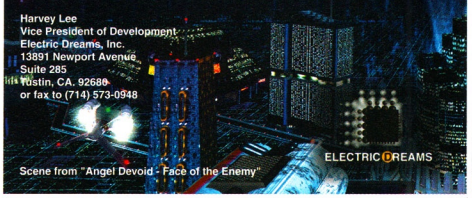
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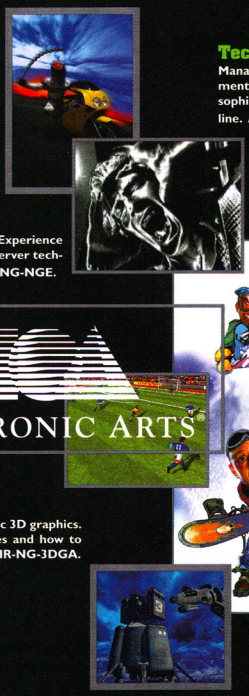
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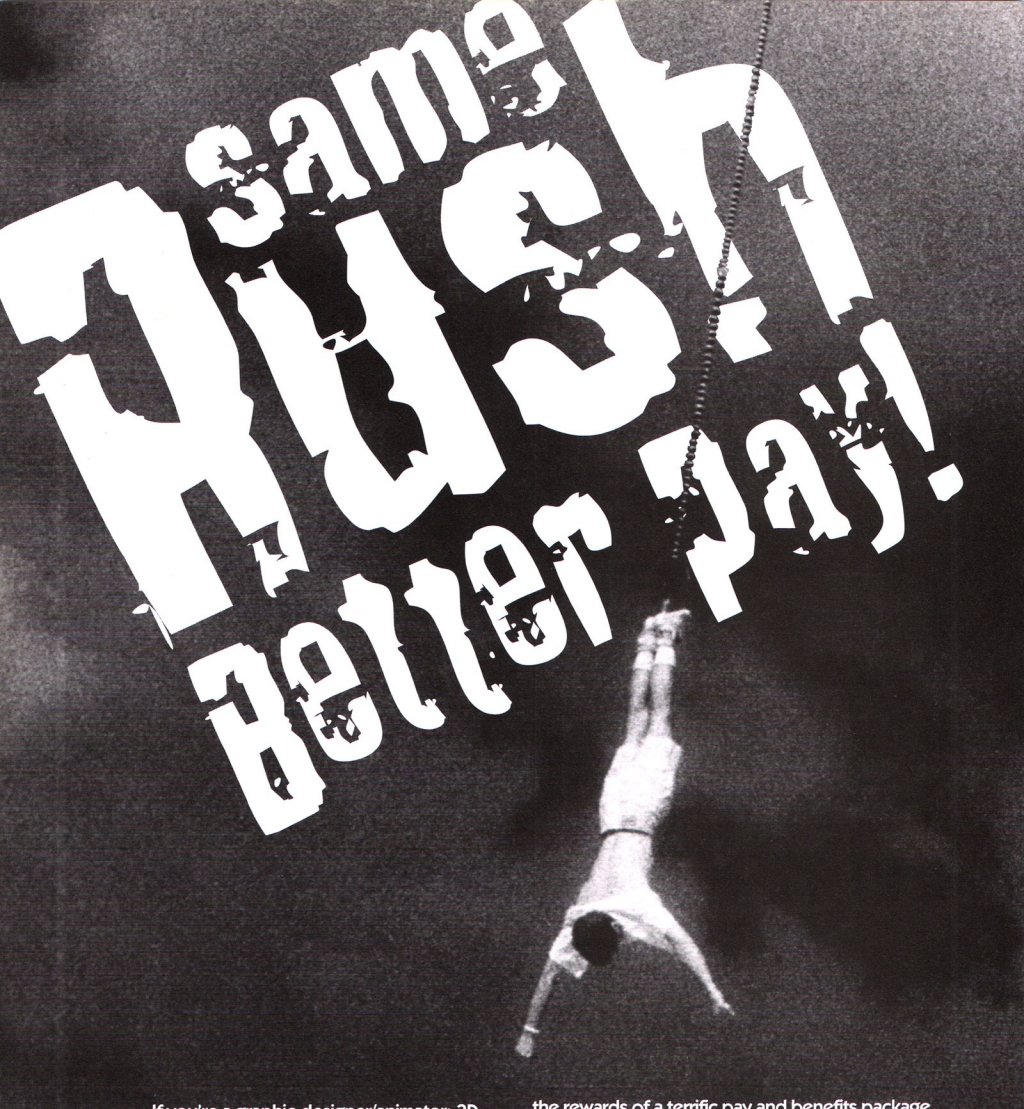
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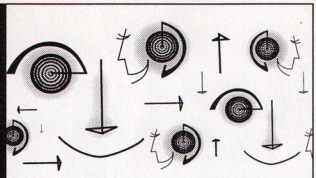
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32-bit postcards from the edge

I was very disappointed to find out there wasn't a single game previewed for just the PlayStation in NG #11. There hasn't been much coverage on sports games for the PlayStation. And *Tekken* hasn't been previewed at all. Please correct these minor mishaps right away, then your mag would be perfect.

Andrew Ringhand
Athol, ID

We've been accused of a lot things, but not covering PlayStation games hasn't been one of them! Most third party games will be shipping for both the PlayStation and Saturn, so unless it's an exclusive Sony or Sega title, chances are the developer will make a version for both systems. We previewed *Tekken* in **NG 2** and reviewed the Japanese version in **NG 7** — far before any other mags, which may be why you missed it. As for sports coverage, you must have missed **NG 10** with the cover story on *Madden '96*. And **NG 9** featured an extensive multiconsole sports alpha. There are a number of sports titles coming out for the PlayStation and other next generation systems — *NFL Gameday* and *Madden '96* among them — and we'll be previewing and reviewing all of them.



The Japanese version of Namco's *Tekken* was reviewed in NG 7

How do you go about picking the order of the game systems that appear at the top of your cover? It can't be alphabetically because the PlayStation is first! You may not want to print this, I mean, how could you possibly explain this?

Michael John Jones
Sanford, ME

Well, we could explain it by saying that if you look at all the back issues, the order of the game systems are changed almost every time, but then people would have a harder time accusing us of being biased... Seriously, though, in our finals reviews section, we list the systems in reverse chronological order, with the most recently released system first (the exception is the Virtual Boy. The order of the systems on the cover changes largely based with what system is mentioned at the very top of the cover, but we tend to put the more powerful systems first.

Why don't any major developers for the 32- and 64-bit systems program in Assembly? Yes, that would increase development times. But even with improved graphic libraries and the best programming in C done to date, the fastest executing code and most power that can be squeezed from custom processors and hardware-contained special effects is always had by going "directly at the hardware." An even "closer-to-the-arcade" *Daytona* version could've been done on Saturn if programmed in Assembly.

Gregory L. Walker
Saginaw, MI

Although Assembly is very fast, and it is used to some degree when developers need an extra speed punch (especially on the Saturn), it has several large disadvantages when compared to C. First, it takes a huge amount of time to do in Assembly what can be done quickly in C, and second, programming in Assembly makes code almost totally unportable between systems. Sega's AM2 does a lot in Assembly, simply because the team doesn't have to worry about portability, and it shows in their games.

Is **NEXT Generation** still going to carry CD-i games? Because I'm thinking of getting a CD-i and I wanted a magazine to read that reviewed games for it. I still might be getting 3DO though.

cybretalon@aol.com

There are almost no CD-i games being released, so there is nothing for us to review! Buying a CD-i would be a huge mistake, in our opinion.

I have heard a rumor that Electronic Arts is having a lot of trouble with the speed of its PlayStation version of *NHL '96*. It's just too fast. People are saying that its release may be held back until next year. Could this be true? And if so, is it a sign of future porting problems to the PlayStation?

John Bishop
via the Internet

Don't believe everything you hear. If they're having problems porting the PC product to the PlayStation, it's because the PC version has access to a lot more RAM than Sony's machine. Slowing down the playtime of a game can be as simple as putting in a "do-nothing" loop in the code that could be written in less time than it takes to read this response.

The same people who cried "Sega sucks" or "Nintendo rules" in the early 1990s have now joined the 32-bit fray. One can't go very far without finding a person such as this. What used to be "*Sonic* rules" or "*Mario* is lame" has become "*Virtua Fighter* blows" or "*Toshinden* gives me wet dreams." My question for these people is, when will you ever wake up and get a clue? The fun of a game isn't determined by a brand name. If you love a game then fine, that's cool. But why must you go out of your way to make someone feel like they made the wrong purchase? After all, everyone's opinions are different.

Some people love the fighting style of *Virtua Fighter Remix*, others hate it. So what? If someone likes a game that you don't, does that make them stupid? I don't think so. However, if you determine all games on a certain system to be terrible, or all games on another system to be great, you're just playing on hype. You're not playing the game, you're playing the advertisement.

Greg Krykewycz
Langhorne, PA

Well put.

Your magazine has been accused quite often of being biased toward the PlayStation over the Saturn system. I own a Saturn, and am

corresponding

therefore obviously biased toward my own system; but I must say that there has been an obvious love of Sony in your past issues. Recently this has improved dramatically, thankfully.

But why did a **NEXT Generation** card offering three free issues of your magazine get packed in with the PlayStation, with the message "The #1 magazine for PlayStation owners"? The magazine pictured was the one with *Destruction Derby* on the cover, which also got the "platinum pick" of that issue. Fine — it's a great looking game. But why did no similar offer exist for Sega Saturn buyers (or other systems)? This certainly does not improve your image of being an unbiased magazine, to simply target the buyers of one system.

Michael Starling

Thanks for the letter. The free offer in the PlayStation box was addressed in the letters section last month (**NG 12**), but the volume of mail on it has been astounding, so let us reiterate: An agreement was made by our business development staff with Sony, which has nothing to do with our editorial department. You will see subscription cards in many other boxes soon, including 3DO hardware and Sega Saturn software boxes (like *VF2* and *Sega Rally*). Also, we will be doing a special, extra issue devoted entirely to the Sega Saturn early this next year.

I have been reading your magazine since the first issue, and have enjoyed your game reviews, features, and overall content. Recently, it has come to my attention that your magazine company, Imagine Publishing Inc., may be owned by one of the major console manufacturers. I find this concept distressing, and no matter what your editorial intentions, the final say in publication rests with your owners. So please allay my fears and tell me who owns your company, and who owns that company if needed, ad infinitum.

Thank you in advance for your reply.

Kirk via the Internet

Imagine Publishing is privately owned, independent, and does not, now nor has it ever, had any affiliation with other companies, hardware, software or otherwise.

I hope you can address a concern I have with the next generation systems. I am a role-playing game fan. American style, not these Japanese style games which proliferate on the home systems. A game like *Daggerfall* would be my primary reason for investing in a home system. However, I find it hard to believe that a Saturn or PlayStation is capable of translating such a game. They may be reasonably proficient where graphics are concerned, but I doubt that they could handle the level of artificial intelligence required.

This only leaves the M2 or the Ultra 64. I have no doubt that the M2, with its Power PC



Both Saturn and PlayStation can handle the AI of *Daggerfall* easily

heart, could handle it, but I'm not so certain about the Ultra 64. My other concern is game saving. A game with as many variables as *Daggerfall* would seem to require a lot of room for storage. The Ultra 64, with its rumored disk drive add-on, could handle it easily, but what about the M2's storage cards? My final concern has to be whether Bethesda even has the intention of translating *Daggerfall* to any of the home systems. Any input you might have on these issues would be greatly appreciated.

James D. Brown
Windsor NC

As far as computer processing power goes, both the Sega Saturn and the Sony PlayStation have more than enough processor power to handle the AI of a game even as complex as *Daggerfall*, but your storage question is definitely a valid one. Save game files, although they used to be as small as 12 K, have grown over the past few years to be as big as several megabytes worth of data, a sizeable bit more than the 512 K capacity of the Saturn or the 128 K that the PlayStation can handle. The memory card for the M2 is unlikely to be that much bigger than either of these, and as far as the Ultra 64's disk drive is concerned, it's release is likely to be so far in the future that you're gong to be waiting for a long time if you plan to hold out.

Fortunately, because storage space isn't really a problem, most PC game makers save a lot of information that they really don't need to, and don't optimize the storage of that information. It is possible that, with a little research, game developers could come up with more efficient ways of handling save games that would be better suited to the console machines. Unfortunately, Bethesda has no current plans to bring *Daggerfall* over to console machines, but who knows what the coming months could bring?

I have never before written a letter to a videogame magazine, but I was so very very disappointed when I opened the October **NG (#10)** and found that you were no longer using the special high quality paper you had been using. I would certainly be willing to pay a bit more to keep the better quality paper. This paper is flimsy, and is not what I paid for when I subscribed in the spring.

Aside from that, I love the magazine and I love the game system coverage. Just to put in my vote, I would like to see articles on old games and systems from the early '80s, for nostalgia. I really hope you bring back the better paper, it really set your mag apart from the others!

William Slattery
Langhorne, PA

The paper change was a very difficult decision that was the result of many discussions at **NEXT Generation**. In the end, it came down to the quality of screen-shots and images in the magazine. The previous paper, a very porous matte, did feel really nice, but it just couldn't hold solid areas of black and made a lot of shots look muddy due to its capacity to soak up ink (also its hue of white was slightly creamy, and made a lot of pictures appear more yellow than they really were). We believe the screen-shots and photos in the magazine look much better now (we're using a low-glare gloss with more of a blue tint, which is more costly than the previous paper), and we hope you agree.

We ran a feature on Retrogaming in **NG 2**, but we are considering a more extensive one for a future issue.

Anyone who owned a Genesis recalls that the reset button, on/off switch, and then, of course, the controllers, all seemed to get buttons that would stick or just not work well, period. So if I am going to buy a Saturn or a PlayStation one of the things I want to know is if my controllers are going to last a few years or if I'll have a ruined control pad or funky buttons after just months.

Aaron Jukes
Cortes Island BC

The combination of Sony PlayStations and old TVs, as well as some glitching when trying to display full-motion video has been reported. We can tell you that after thousands of hours of use (and abuse), we have had no problems with our PlayStations or Saturns (or their controllers) in our offices or homes, despite some extremely rough treatment of the controllers, particularly after two-player games.

We were flattered to be named Power Players in your November issue. We are also flattered that you think that we were once a part of Jaron Lanier's VPL.

We never were. Although many who were at VPL are our friends and are Power Players in their own right. Thank you for putting us in the company of these incredibly talented people.

Mark Long &
Joanna Alexander
Zombie Virtual Reality Entertainment

Next Month



Nintendo reveals Ultra 64

At the Shoshinkai show in Japan on November 24, Nintendo unveiled Ultra 64, its secret 64-bit superconsole to the world (except, of course, in Japan it's called Nintendo 64). This unveiling marks the entry of Nintendo into the next generation battleground, and marks the start of the full-scale war. **NEXT Generation** was there, and next month brings you the full story.

NEXT Generation #14
on sale January 16, 1996.

Clever readers (and we'd like to think that all readers of NG are clever) have already subscribed. For more information on how to save money, guarantee your early copy, and to receive free game tips, turn to the insert between pages 32 and 33.



The way games ought to be...

Hi-octane game theory by **Chris Crawford**

Hollywood and Silicon Valley: a match made in heaven? Not so fast. If interactive entertainment is the offspring of this marriage, we may be waiting a long time...

The starting point of this discussion is the conflict between plot and interaction. There are theoretical reasons for this conflict. They are best seen from the point of view of the plot faction. Many of these people are writers. Plot creation is, from their point of view, an enormously difficult task demanding great talent and creative energy. The thought of permitting an audience to mess up their carefully crafted plots leaves them cold. Knowing how difficult it is to create a plot that works well, they realize that any intrusion by the audience into the process will only yield garbage. If interactivity requires the audience to involve itself in the direction of the plot, then clearly — according to this side — interactivity and plot are incompatible.

Add to this the attitude of the other side. The protagonists of interaction tend to take a dim view of plot. The strongest example of this is the possibly apocryphal story about Id Software and the creation of *Doom*. There was, so the story goes, some dispute within the organization about the proper role of the story in the game. One faction argued that there should be some story element to tie everything together. The other faction argued that *Doom* was to be an action game, pure and simple, and that "we don't need no steenking story." In time, the anti-story faction won out, the losers left the company, and nowadays story is referred to within Id as the "S word."

So the story goes.

Now, consider one of the most powerful storytelling products to appear on a CD: *The Madness of Roland*. This is a story with no interaction whatsoever. It would seem that the author of *The Madness of Roland* had said to himself, "we don't need no steenking interaction."

What's particularly interesting is that plot and interaction seem to contradict each other in the sales figures. The top games of the last year have been games with all interaction and no plot (*Doom II*) or games with all plot and no interaction (*Myst*, *7th Guest*). Could it be that there is no workable middle ground?

One of the things that really trips up creative people new to our industry is the problem of control. They usually come from a creative environment in which artistic control is absolute. A writer, for example, exercises total control over the work. She decides the plot, the characters, the interactions between the characters,

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how they respond to situations — everything. Oh sure, she may have to share her control with somebody else — an editor, perhaps, or some other collaborator. But even then, this little clique retains absolute control over the work. This complete creative control applies in all traditional media: literature, movies, television, music, painting, theater...the artist always controls the experience.

Such control is both necessary and desirable in these media. If I buy a book, I don't expect to open it up and find blank pages with an exhortation from the author to "fill them with whatever feels good." That's *her* job, damnit! When I pay good money for information, I expect to get some information, not a blank page. Thus the expectation of control is deeply embedded in the thinking of all artists from conventional fields. They just assume that they'll have control over the situation.

But this expectation is seriously out of touch with the strange new world of interactive entertainment. The fundamental, unavoidable truth is that the audience should make all the critical decisions. The audience is the protagonist, and the audience determines the protagonist's actions, not the artist.

Most artists just can't get this down their craws. They refuse to let go of their direct creative control. In the process, they deprive the interactive entertainment audience of any meaningful choice. Their work frog-marches the audience down a primrose path; after all, the artist knows better than the ignorant audience. The artist has a clearer artistic vision; if the audience were allowed to intrude into this process, the clumsy oafs would only spoil the artist's beautiful plan.

What overwhelming pride! What self-centered narrowness! Such people should stay in their expository fields and bestow their brilliance upon passive audiences in time-honored fashion. They should certainly have stayed out of the interactive fields.

On the other hand, if the artist surrenders direct control when moving into the interactive arena, what then motivates the artistic spirit wither her breast? Why should she endure creative agony when it will not yield the satisfaction derived from creation? The answer is that control should not be lost, but instead it should merely become indirect.

Perhaps a theological analogy might clarify the issue. Assume that you believe in God. Assume further that this God controls the universe, that all things happen according to his will. Question: how closely does God control the universe? Does God attend to every raindrop, specifying its position from one instant to the next? Does God guide the murderer's fingers and put every syllable into the saint's mouth?

Why would it be necessary for God to exercise such micro-management over his universe? Why would he busy himself with so many petty details? Would it not be more

reasonable for him to establish whatever laws of nature struck his fancy, and then allow those laws to act without divine intervention? He still controls the universe, with a greater degree of indirection.

In the same fashion, when game developers create a microscopic universe inside our computers, we become petty gods. We control our universes — but must we do so as puppeteers? Can we not derive greater satisfaction from our creation by playing the role of architect rather than puppeteer, granting our audience the autonomy to exercise its "free will?" Is this not a wiser and better way to play god?

Of course, this is the solution. But the Silicon Valley and the game community's continued fascination with Hollywood isn't helping bring this solution about.

For Hollywood, storytelling lies at the center of the creative universe. The story is everything; all else serves to advance and improve the storytelling process. Thus, Hollywood comes to the marriage with Silicon Valley and asks, "how can the high-tech doodads and gizmos of Silicon Valley be used to improve our storytelling?" Creativity in Hollywood means creativity in making stories. First, we decide the story we want to tell, then we figure out how to do it. The technology is just another means of supporting this process.

For Silicon Valley, technology lies at the center of the universe. We play around in labs with the technology, trying out all sorts of kooky ideas, until we come up with something that's faster, bigger, smaller, or cheaper. Then we ask ourselves, what can we do with this superior technology?

The Hollywood people look at this and shake their heads in disgust: "How can those Silicon Valley people get anything done when they don't have their priorities straight?" The Silicon Valley people counter that this is the nature of the creative process in a high-tech environment. The fact is, this method has worked beautifully for years and Silicon Valley isn't about to abandon the technique.

So how are we going to make worthwhile products when the key creative types in Silicon Valley and Hollywood are as compatible as discs for the PlayStation and Saturn? How can we do business when they say "potahto" and we say "potayto?" The obvious answer is that we need to form creative teams that merge the best talent of Hollywood and Silicon Valley. Right — just like Rocket Science...

Shotgun marriages don't work. The worst mistake you can make is to take some "top Hollywood talent" and some "top Silicon Valley talent" and put them together on the same team. Sorry, you can't have two prima donnas in one show.

What makes a person "top talent" in his/her respective field? It's excellence in that field — which pretty much precludes competence in a radically different field. You wouldn't expect a great actor to be good at woodworking, or a hot-shot director to be a hot-shot brain surgeon, or a stellar screenwriter to be a top-notch golfer, would you? So why would you expect any of these people to be good at interactivity? And the same thing goes, of course, for the Silicon Valley people trying to tell stories.

You can't get a duck by strapping swimming fins on a chicken, nor by gluing feathers on a carp. You need an organic integration of both sets of skills, and jamming people with disparate skills on to one teams does not constitute "organic integration." You need one person with strong interactive skills and one with strong storytelling skills.

Right now, such people don't exist. You have to grow them. You most certainly don't start with a big-name person from one field and then hope that they can learn the other field. The net talent of a bi-talented person is not the sum of the individual talents, it's the product. Thus a "10" in the storytelling side who learns enough to be a "1" on the interactivity side doesn't perform anywhere near as well as somebody who's a "5" in each of the two fields. Like genes, they don't average; the dominant gene wins and the recessive gene loses.

The storyteller has the clearer artistic vision. If the audience were allowed to intrude into its process, the clumsy oafs would only spoil the artist's plan

The way to do it is to start with some bright-eyed, bushy-tailed kid with lots of promise and very little else, and then force that kid to play on both sides of the fence. A young person has less to unlearn than an old pro. Moreover, I think you're better off starting with arts/humanities people than with science/technology people. My impression is that one programmer in a hundred has the aptitude to learn storytelling but that one writer in 10 has the aptitude to learn programming. Programmers are made, but artists are born. And like the race problem, it won't be solved by getting the old racists to talk nice to each other. They'll never get it. Every penny you spend trying to get them to work together is money down the drain.

The way games ought to be...

Some may object that this is great theory, but in practice, nobody could ever handle so deeply intellectual a process. Yet this process-intensive style of storytelling is done all the time, and by amateurs, no less. Here's grandpa taking little Annie up to bed:

"Tell me a story, Grandpa!" she asks.

"OK," he replies, "Once there was a pretty little girl who had a pony..."

"Was it a white pony?" Annie interrupts.

"Oh my, yes, it was as white as snow. It was so white that the sunlight reflected from its coat dazzled the eye. And together they would go riding on the beach..."

"Did they ride in the mountains, too?"

"Why yes, a matter of fact, they did. After riding along the beach, they would ride up the green canyons, jumping over the brush and ducking under tree branches, until they came to the very tip of the snow-covered mountains. And there they would play at jumping over boulders..."

"I don't like to jump."

"Well then, instead of jumping, she would let her pony graze in the rich deep grass while she sat in the sun..."

And so the story goes. Note that Grandpa does not respond to Annie's interruptions with "Shuddup, kid, you're messing up my carefully prepared plot!" He wants those interruptions, his storytelling thrives on them. Grandpa does not enter the room with a carefully planned and polished plot, all set to dazzle Annie. He comes in with basic principles of storytelling, and then he makes up the story as he goes along — in response to Annie's needs and interests. The story that he creates is his very special story, it means more and has more emotional power than any high-tech Hollywood script. Yes, it lacks the careful plotting, the intricate development, and the glorious special effects of Hollywood. But its roughness is compensated for by its customization. Sure, Annie likes *The Lion King*, but she loves *Annie and the White Pony*.

Now, if some schmuck of an amateur storytelling Grandpa can pull that off, why can't we big-shot professionals do the same?

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The way games ought to be...
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Diddy's back and better than ever.

Fasten your seat belt. This monkey's coming full throttle. Donkey Kong Country 2™: Diddy's Kong Quest™. Sleek, stylish and fully loaded. With ACM graphics, 32 megs and so many new levels, it even outperforms last year's model. But don't take our word for it. Let Diddy take you once around the park — sunken pirate ships, roller coasters, beehives. (Watch the sticky stuff!)



Torrential rain, bloodthirsty pirates, and now your ship is sinking...have a nice day.

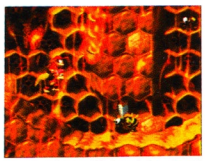


Dixie twirls her ponytail to fly chopper style—talk about a buzz cut!



Guess who's back in town.

Or take his new pal Dixie for a spin — literally. This chimpette flies! There are other special moves too, like the **Buddy Toss** (please kids, don't try this at home). We even threw in a bunch of multiple endings. But hey, what do you expect from the **biggest evolution** in history. Except another game that leaves everything else far behind. (Ever been behind a monkey? It **ain't pretty.**)



Look alive! There's more hidden stuff than ever.



Now there are smarter Kremlings out to slap your monkey around. Ouch!

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